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ABSTRACT

The first in a series of annual interim reports on the federally funded Experimental Schools (ES) program, this report describes the first 2 years of a 6-year research program designed to promote locally-initiated comprehensive educational change dependent upon community participation, with provision for systematic documentation and evaluation. Focusing on the 1972-73 planning stages and the 1973-74 implementation procedures of 10 small rural school districts, chosen via nationwide competition, this report: (1) traces the beginnings of the ES program and presents research procedures for program documentation and evaluation; (2) presents background material on the 10 sites; (3) defines the individual goals of the 10 school districts, summarizes and compares the most significant proposals for change, and delineates common plans for educational progress and problem solving; (4) describes and analyzes the amount of implementation achieved by the 10 school districts (initial findings and suggestions of tentative patterns); and (5) examines community and school characteristics associated with tentative findings (the planning process, the desire and impetus for change, the amount of experience with educational change in the district's organization, the commitment of district leaders, and the centralization/coordination of the decision making process). (JC)

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First Annual Substantive Report
for a Study of
Experimental Schools Projects
In Small Schools Serving Rural Areas

April 15, 1975

BIG CHANGES FOR RURAL SCHOOLS:
PLANS AND PROGRESS

Prepared for

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
Experimental Schools Program
Washington, D. C. 20208

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OVERVIEW

This first interim report focuses exclusively upon the first two years of this five-year project--what we have called the "initial planning", and "early implementation" stages. As one important objective of the Experimental Schools program is to see "what sticks"--how to bring about lasting change--a thorough consideration of important research and policy questions of the Experimental Schools program must necessarily await completion of the five-year period. At that time, a report will be issued on the lasting effects of this program--especially its effects on rural youth, rural adults, and their communities. Until then our conclusions should be viewed as tentative and subject to revision as we expand our data collection and analysis procedures.

The findings we present in this report are illustrative, not definitive. We have tried to present a limited amount of information in a form likely to be useful and interesting to practicing educators. When we introduce the ten school districts and describe some of their history (Chapters One and Two), we identify them by name. In presenting their five-year plans and considering the implementation of these plans to date (Chapters Three, Four, and Five), we have made every reasonable effort to protect privacy. Such protection is essential in order to maintain the trust and confidence ten school districts have placed in us.

Chapter One traces the beginnings of the Experimental Schools (ES) program established in 1972 by the U. S. Office of Education. It explains the purposes of ES, its criteria, its process for the selection of ten experimental sites. Finally it describes the design of the research studies Abt Associates has coordinated in order to document and evaluate the five-year project.

Chapter Two provides some background material on the ten sites. The first section identifies them and some of their pertinent statistics, a listing, in effect, of some identifiable characteristics. A second section offers a narrative sketch of some historical patterns that have shaped these communities.

A final section presents a look at the school districts as they are today, and the dilemmas they face, for the most part, with the rest of rural America.

The material in this chapter has been selected primarily from the two-volume report, RURAL AMERICA: A Social and Educational History of Ten Communities, prepared by Abt Associates.[1] The chapter should not be seen, however, as a synthesis of this large report. Rather, it is an attempt to offer the reader, in brief, a viewing perspective of the rural community as it affects this project.

Chapter Three, on the other hand, is a synthesis. This chapter breaks down those plans drawn up with federal assistance by the ten small rural school districts in 1972-1973. It summarizes the central questions asked in each proposal and explains how these communities planned to find answers.

The first section defines the goals these school districts envisioned for themselves, what they wanted for their students, their schools, and their communities. The second section summarizes and compares the most significant proposals for change as they appear throughout the plans. The third section delineates their common plans for evaluating their progress and their problems.

Chapter Three attempts no judgments or assumptions on the eventual success or failure of these proposals. The plans themselves, lengthy documents totaling more than 1,000 pages, are the sole source of the chapter, a way, we believe, of insuring their integrity along with that of their authors. The voice in the chapter, to the extent possible, is the voice, in the aggregate, of the people who drew up the plans.

Chapter Four is a description and analysis of the amount of implementation achieved by these ten school districts at the end of the 1973-74 school year.

[1] See Stephen J. Fitzsimmons, Peter Wolff, and Abby Freedman, Editors, Rural America: A Social and Educational History of Ten Communities (Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Associates Inc., April 15, 1975).

- It explains the terminology used to describe different stages in the five-year process of change.

- It defines the types of educational change the Experimental Schools program is concerned with and how the ten sites differ in their approach to these changes.

- It offers some initial findings during the early Experimental Schools implementation period, using several graphs to illustrate the kind of materials used to develop our analysis.

- It suggests some patterns of comprehensive educational change, not as concrete evidence, but as indicators of the kind of material the final report will coordinate.

Chapter Five examines community and school characteristics that seem to be associated with the findings outlined in Chapter Four. It describes how the stage of a community's development, the social and cultural similarity within a community, and the quality of life of a community seem to affect educational change as prescribed by the Experimental Schools program.

The final section examines the organizational characteristics that seem to affect educational change. At this stage in the program, five such characteristics appear to have influence on the program in one direction or another. These five--the planning process; the desire and impetus for change; the amount of experience with educational change within the school district's organization; the commitment of school district leaders; and the centralization and coordination of decision making processes--are briefly analyzed in light of the studies currently being undertaken.

Chapter Five draws upon research in progress. The material is presented with the reminder that more materials will be available to answer pressing questions in the next three years.

This report is interdisciplinary in focus and draws its data from a variety of sources--historical documents, local project plans, census reports, survey questionnaires, interviews, and on-site participant observation. The reader should recognize that the rules for establishing the "reliability" of data vary greatly from one discipline to another--what is considered "hard" data by the historian, may be considered "soft" data by the experimental psychologist. Subsequent reports will address this issue in greater detail.

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PREFACE

This document is the first in a series of annual interim reports on the substance of the Experimental Schools Program for Small Schools Serving Rural Areas. It has been prepared to alert educators to the potential the Experimental Schools program may hold for the improvement of education in rural America.

We plan to issue three additional interim reports, early in 1976, 1977 and 1978. Early in 1979 we will issue a multi-volume final report. That report will bring together the findings of this research effort and direct them towards several audiences:

- Federal decision makers interested in the policy implications of this portion of the Experimental Schools program;
- Practicing educators at all levels of the American educational system interested in ways this program is applicable to other small rural school districts interested in educational improvement;
- Trainers interested in the discovery of new knowledge and techniques which can be used to assist practicing educators in their efforts of educational improvement.
- Researchers interested in the study of rural education as a social and cultural phenomenon.

Full documentation of this study will not be available until 1979. This report describes only the first two years of a six-year research program. Our focus is primarily on the detailed plans these ten small rural school districts prepared during the 1972-73 school year and on their progress in implementing those plans during the 1973-74 school year. We will update this report each year as we gain further insight into the implementation process and as we observe changes in the students and communities affected by these projects.

This long-term research project involves many people. We are particularly grateful to the pupils, faculty, staff, and citizens of the ten school districts which agreed to have us "look over their shoulders" while they contend with the problems and prospects of planned educational change. We know that our need to learn about their efforts has often taken time away from their primary task of improving their educational programs. They made this time available to us in the hope that what we learn from their experiences can be useful to the many other small rural school districts not participating in this experimental program.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 1972 Congress reaffirmed its historical commitment to equality by declaring that it will be the policy of the United States "to provide to every person an equal opportunity to receive an education of high quality regardless of his race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or social class."[1] After considerable study and extensive testimony from representatives of all segments of American society, Congress concluded that the American educational system had not achieved this objective, and that there persists in our society pronounced inequalities in the opportunity to receive "an education of high quality." Although inequality of educational opportunity takes many forms, it seems particularly pronounced in isolated and semi-isolated rural school districts with many low income families.

Rural America is larger than most people realize. One of every four Americans lives in rural communities or localities. As one observer recently pointed out, if our urban population did not exist, rural America would be large enough to be classified as the world's eighth largest country.[2] "To the surprise of most Americans," James T. Horner points out, "there is proportionately three times more poverty on farms (three in ten) than in our cities (one in ten). One half of the poverty families, those with less than $3,500 income, are rural families."[3]

These statistics of rural life in America are only part of the reason legislators have shown concern for the segment of our country which remains a vestige of a highly prized frontier way of life. The social structures, work patterns, and youthful aspirations of rural Americans are in flux. There has been, in recent times, a decrease in the labor requirements of farms--a situation that has resulted in the migration of farm youth along with a tendency to seek non-farm employment. Seemingly unneeded, and apparently unable to cull a living from traditional agricultural labor, young people who have been brought up in rural environments tend to move in haste, without much

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[1] U. S. Congress, Public Law 92-318, p. 390.

[2] Horner, James T., "Rural Schools Renaissance Vital for U. S.," in A Good Life for More People: The Yearbook of Agriculture 1971 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 162-3.

[3] ibid.

information or deliberation. The problems they subsequently face in urban, suburban, or extended rural areas are made more painful by the poor or severely limited educational preparation afforded them by their home locales.

Education in rural America has, for the most part, proved inadequate for preparing youth for diversified employment patterns in urban areas and the possibilities of an increasingly mobile way of life. Social trends, economic change, a decrease in the ability of many communities to remain self-sufficient, increased state and federal regulation, have all compounded the expectations rural citizens place on their schools. Their educational institutions, during the past decade, have rapidly fallen behind metropolitan systems.

NEW HELP FOR RURAL SCHOOLS

In July 1972 the U. S. Office of Education introduced an innovative program of educational research and development which could help rural communities mobilize their resources for educational improvement. It extended to small rural school districts its Experimental Schools program--a program established in 1971 to assist larger school districts. The Experimental Schools program was designed to test the assumption "that significant and lasting improvements in education, beyond those made possible by piecemeal innovative elements, are more likely to occur if comprehensive changes are introduced into all elements of a school system."[4]

This idea had its roots in previously funded federal experiments. During the 1960's thousands of educational improvement projects (many supported by Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) were optimistically inaugurated. In spite of an enormous effort by devoted teachers, pupils, parents, administrators, and researchers, it was apparent at the end of the decade that these programs had not brought about lasting improvements. Educational systems were far more complex, it appeared, than many innovators realized.

Concurrently, the Ford Foundation conducted a $30 million "Comprehensive School Improvement Program." Their limited research suggests that a comprehensive program ought to "look beyond the manipulation of variables within the school and reckon more directly with outside factors such as financing, parent expectations, and local social and political pressures."[5]

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[4] NIE: Its History and Programs (Washington, D. C.: NIE Office of Public Information, February 28, 1974), p. 38.

[5] A Foundation Goes to School (New York: The Ford Foundation, 1972), p. 40.

The U. S. Office of Education wanted to base its new initiatives on what had been learned from past experiences. In order to study the impact of locally-initiated comprehensive educational change, in 1971 the Office of Education believed it essential that:

- School districts analyze their own problems and devise their own solutions.
- Local school personnel and the community choose new curriculum, organization, staffing, and internal evaluation.
- School districts include in their plans for change all significant elements of their school programs so that each area is consistent with and supportive of all other areas.
- All grade levels (K-12) be included in plans for change.
- Target populations be large enough for the new programs to be significant but small enough to be thoroughly evaluated.
- Projects last for five years to allow for continuity and internal integrity while possible alternatives are tested and retested.

The federal government agreed to commit long-term funding and technical assistance to a small number of diverse rural school districts. In return, those districts would plan and implement their own programs. Through such agreements researchers hoped to learn how to help other school districts with similar needs and problems.

In sum, the Experimental Schools program emphasizes locally-initiated comprehensive educational change dependent on community participation with provision for systematic documentation and evaluation. The program's goal is to study a few in order to affect many.

A NATIONWIDE COMPETITION

In March 1972, the Experimental Schools program announced a competition. All school districts in the United States with less than 2,500 pupils and serving primarily rural areas were invited to express their interest in a new five-year project.

Could interested school districts propose ways to build upon the strengths inherent in their local communities? They were counseled not to be defensive about being a small district, and to suggest how they could "seek quality and improvement in ways specifically appropriate to smallness."[6]

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[6] Experimental Schools Program: Announcement of a Competition for Small Rural Schools (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Office of Education, March 10, 1972) p. 1

Interested school districts were asked to submit informal letters of interest. They were advised that all grade levels (K-12) and all students must be included in their plans, and attention given to problems of poorly performing students and students from low income families. Their letters would be reviewed by a selection committee interested in the following questions:

- Does the community and student population meet predefined criteria for a small school district serving a rural area?
- Do the ideas for educational change use local strengths and resources to overcome weaknesses?
- Does the district's proposal seem likely to overcome its stated weaknesses?
- Does the proposal represent a "comprehensive" approach to problem solving?
- Will the proposed changes meet the needs of individual students in the district?
- Will the community be significantly involved in all aspects of the project?
- Will the proposal benefit the district as a whole?
- Will the project provide for quality education in small rural areas?

Approximately 320 school districts responded to the Experimental Schools' invitation, and twelve were selected for participation. Six were awarded one-year grants to plan in greater detail a five-year project of comprehensive educational change, with a firm understanding subsequently that they would be funded for four additional years; six others received one-year planning grants, but with the understanding that long-term funding would be conditional upon the results of their one-year planning process. Four of those six were subsequently awarded long-term funding.

Experimental Schools funding has been provided these ten school districts for a transformation of their educational program. It cannot be used to pay for activities already under way, for routine captial improvements, or for the acquisition of materials. As one NIE official described them, these funds should provide a five-year "bubble" in each school district's budget. They are designed to bear the expense of comprehensive educational change.

At the end of this five-year period, these school districts are expected to be doing very different things educationally--without depending on external funds for continuing projects which came about because of their ES involvement.

Ten small rural school districts survived a rigorous selection process. They stood ready to develop and implement their own comprehensive plans for educational change. Geographically, they are diverse--located in distinct regions of the United States (see Figure 1.1).

RESEARCH TO ASSIST PRACTICE

The Experimental Schools program also conducted a nationwide competition to select an independent research organization to "document and evaluate" its small rural schools project.[7] Each interested organization was asked to indicate its capabilities to conduct a large-scale, long-term research effort. How would they deal with a series of complex organizational and inter-organizational problems inherent in this type of applied educational research?

In June 1972 Abt Associates won that competition. Abt Associates was then asked to design and implement a documentation and evaluation program to study the six small rural school districts given long-term commitments. This research was transferred to the National Institute of Education on August 1, 1972. In June 1973 the number of school districts was increased from six to ten.

Since July 1972 those ten school districts have been busy planning and implementing their five-year projects and Abt Associates has been coordinating its program for their documentation and evaluation. Abt Associates' current evaluative design calls for a series of separate, coordinated research studies within a single broad effort called "A Longitudinal Study of Educational Change in Rural America," or more briefly, "Project Rural." Two studies are being conducted independently at each district. They are tailored to the unique characteristics of these communities, their school systems, and their plans for comprehensive change. These "site-specific" studies ask the following questions:

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[7] U. S. Office of Education, Request for Proposals No. 72-56, Evaluation and Documentation of Experimental Schools Projects in Small Schools Serving Rural Areas, May 10, 1972.

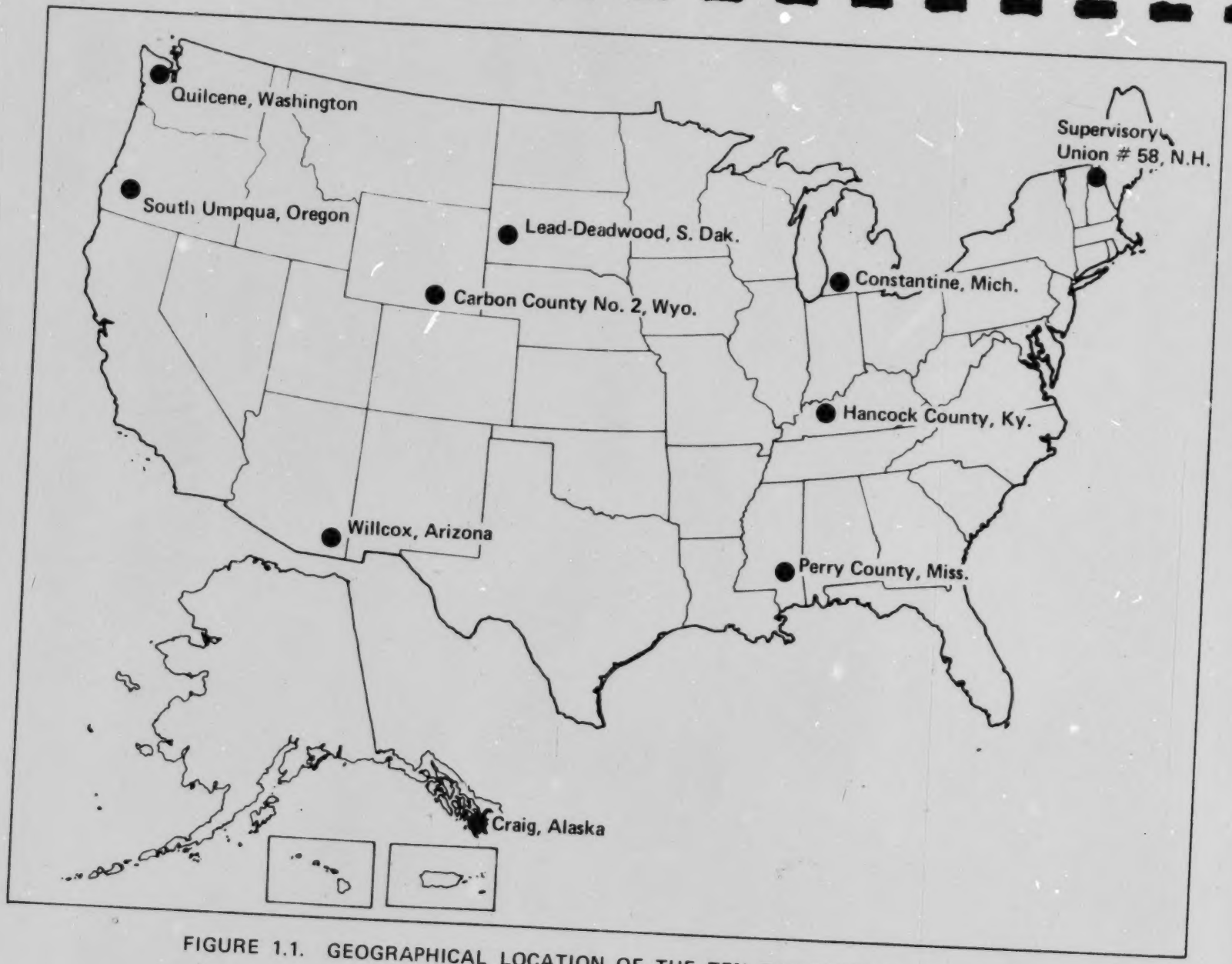

FIGURE 1.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE TEN EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOLS PROJECTS FOR SMALL SCHOOLS SERVING RURAL AREAS.

- What factors in the social and educational history of each district can help others to understand better how to plan and implement comprehensive educational change?

- What factors in the contemporary life of each school district and its associated communities can help others to understand better how to plan and implement comprehensive educational change?

Three other studies use uniform research designs for all ten school districts. These "cross-site" studies ask the following questions:

- What characteristics of communities influence and are influenced by the process of locally-initiated comprehensive educational change?

- What characteristics of schools and school districts influence and are influenced by the process of locally-initiated comprehensive educational change?

- What characteristics of pupils influence and are influenced by the process of locally-initiated comprehensive educational change?

Abt Associates has assembled a multi-disciplinary team of anthropologists, educators, sociologists, and social psychologists. Cross-site studies are directed by persons trained in analytic survey research. They work primarily in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Abt's approach to cross-site data collections depends on a blend of survey and field methods.

Site-specific studies are directed and conducted by trained "field workers" who live full-time in each of the ten districts. Each field worker:

- is a principal investigator for a "site history" and "a site case study".

- is a source of information for portions of the cross-site studies.

- arranges for the administration of some of the survey questionnaires.

Abt is also pursuing a series of policy questions which will draw their answers from the above noted studies. One set focuses primarily on the objectives of the Experimental Schools program. Specifically:

- Can a holistic, district-wide approach to educational change in small rural school districts produce lasting beneficial results?
- How do small rural school districts implement formative evaluation procedures so that they can benefit from the Experimental Schools program?
- How can Experimental Schools program findings serve other small rural school districts interested in locally-initiated educational change?

Abt is also interested in a series of broader questions of public policy. Specifically:

- What educational needs set small rural school districts apart from larger suburban and urban counterparts?
- What different patterns of educational needs are found in different types of small rural communities?
- How can educational resources of small rural school districts be mobilized to contribute to the overall quality of life in rural communities?
- How can other local resources contribute to the schooling of rural youth and the continuing education of rural adults?
- What is the impact of comprehensive educational change on the overall quality of life in small rural communities?
- What is a productive balance between federal, state, and local initiatives in achieving lasting educational change in small rural school districts?
- In areas where local initiatives are not feasible, what is a productive balance between outside project funding, technical assistance, and project monitoring activities?

CHAPTER TWO

TEN RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS[1]

Comprehensive educational change does not occur in rural communities in isolation from social, economic, geological and historical factors--factors which affect all local school systems. In these ten rural school districts,[2] separated by geography and size from the fragmentation and sophistication of larger, more complicated urban society, this interlocking of education, local customs, and attitudes seems all the more striking. The people of these communities are often still in touch with their historical roots. Many founding families still live in homes built by grandparents who homesteaded the surrounding land. Several communities are barely 100 years old. Schooling, and therefore schools, have only recently become an issue in these "frontier" communities.

Understanding the roles these ten school districts have played in America's frontier expansion is crucial to an understanding of their schools today. The men, women, and children who survived and thrived in frontier life have left behind a legacy--a strong sense of individualism; a true value placed on neighborliness; a fundamental attachment to working the land; and a spirit of industriousness which in its day kept a vision of riches and opportunity in the mind of each settler.

This chapter analyzes the differences and similarities in the way historical development affected these ten school districts so that ir 1972, when the Experimental Schools program took form in each district, a variety of rural experiences could be tested. The first section includes a series of basic facts about each district. It identifies the ten rural school districts and provides current statistical information on each one.

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[1] Historical statements made in this chapter are based primarily upon an analysis of the social and educational histories of each school district prepared by Abt Associates Inc. under contract to the National Institute of Education. For the more complete historical statements, see Stephen J. Fitzsimmons and Peter Wolff, Editors, Rural America: A Social and Educational History of Ten Communities (Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Associates Inc., April 15, 1975).

[2] Throughout this report we have used the term, "school district" to refer to the administrative unit for these ten Experimental Schools projects. However, in one instance (Union 58), the administrative unit is a supervisory union of three autonomous districts. In another instance (Quilcene) the administrative unit involves two autonomous districts, each with its own contract with the National Institute of Education.

A second section considers significant historical patterns emerging during the early settlement period of these localities and suggests some lasting effects on both the community at large and the educational system in particular.

The final section examines the school districts as they look today, and explores some dilemmas which they--and most other small rural school districts--currently face.

BASIC FACTS

State: Alaska
School District: Craig School District
Number of Pupils (1972-73): 148
Number of Schools (1972-73): 2
Per-Pupil Expenditure (CPI-Adjusted)[3] (1972-73): $1,215
Location: On Prince of Wales Island, 60 air miles west of Ketchikan, 750 miles north of Seattle, 220 mi. south of Juneau
Area: 75 acres (1972)
First White Settlement: 1911
Population (1970): 272
Major Communities: Craig
Major Industries: Forestry, fishing, manufacturing (canning, wood products)

State: Arizona
School District: Willcox Public School District
Number of Pupils (1972-73): 1,503
Number of Schools (1972-73): 3
Per-Pupil Expenditure (CPI-Adjusted) (1972-73): $886
Location: In Cochise County, 80 miles east of Tucson
Area: 925 square miles
First Anglo Settlement: circa 1858
Population (1970): 4,535
Major Communities: Willcox
Major Industries: Agriculture (cattle), tourism, retail trade and services

[3] In order to standardize cross-site comparisons of per-pupil expenditure for regional cost of living differences, the per-pupil expenditure data reported by each district were adjusted using consumer price index (CPI) data for non-metropolitan areas in the fall of 1973. See U.S. Department of Labor, Monthly Labor Review (August, 1974), p. 59.

State: Kentucky

School District: Hancock County School District

Number of Pupils (1972-73): 1,510

Number of Schools (1972-73): 4

Per-Pupil Expenditure (CPI-Adjusted) (1972-73): $739

Location: On the Ohio River 90 miles west of Louisville

Area: 187 square miles

First Settlement: circa 1800

Population (1970): 7,080

Major Communities: Lewisport, Hawesville

Major Industries: Agriculture (tobacco, cattle, corn, soybeans and wheat), manufacturing (stone, clay, lumber and paper products, sheet-plate aluminum) contract construction, retail trade, and services

State: Michigan

School District: Constantine Public Schools

Number of Pupils (1972-73): 1,668

Number of Schools (1972-73): 4

Per-Pupil Expenditure (CPI-Adjusted) (1972-73): $787

Location: In portions of Cass and St. Joseph Counties, 35 miles south of Kalamazoo and 35 miles northeast of South Bend, Indiana

Area: 110 square miles

First Settlement: 1828

Population (1970): 5,038

Major Communities: Constantine

Major Industries: Manufacturing (paper products, milk products, recreational vehicles), retail trade, services and farming

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State: Mississippi

School District: Perry County School District

Number of Pupils (1972-73): 1,507

Number of Schools (1972-73): 6

Per-Pupil Expenditure (CPI-Adjusted) (1972-73): $672

Location: 100 miles southeast of Jackson and 60 miles northwest of Mobile

Area: 528 square miles

First Settlement: circa 1812

Population (1970): 5,908

Major Communities: New Augusta, Beaumont, and Runnelstown

Major Industries: Logging, manufacturing (wood products, textiles), retail trade

State: New Hampshire

School District: Supervisory Union 58 (comprised of the Northumberland, Stark, and Stratford School Districts)

Number of Pupils (1972-73): 1,128

Number of Schools (1972-73): 4

Per-Pupil Expenditure (CPI-Adjusted) (1972-73): $473

Location: In Coös County 27 miles northwest of Berlin, N. H., 29 miles northeast of Littleton, N. H., 130 miles southeast of Montreal, and 180 miles northwest of Boston

Area: 179 square miles

First Settlement: 1767

Population (1970): 3,816

Major Communities: Groveton and North Stratford

Major Industries: Manufacturing (paper and wood products), retail trade and services

0020

State: Oregon

School District: South Umpqua School District 19C

Number of Pupils (1972-73): 2,275

Number of Schools (1972-73): 5

Per-Pupil Expenditure (CPI-Adjusted) (1972-73): $884

Location: In southern Douglas County 90 miles south of Eugene and 90 miles north of Medford

Area: 340 square miles

First Settlement: 1851

Population (1970): 8,037

Major Communities: Canyonville, Tri-City, Myrtle Creek, North Myrtle, South Myrtle

Major Industries: Manufacturing (lumber mills), retail trade, and services

State: South Dakota

School District: Lead-Deadwood School District #106

Number of Pupils (1972-73): 2,350

Number of Schools (1972-73): 8

Per-Pupil Expenditure (CPI-Adjusted) (1972-73): $1,176

Location: In Lawrence County 45 miles northwest of Rapid City, 400 miles north of Denver, and 600 miles west of Minneapolis-St. Paul

Area: 430 square miles

First Settlement: 1875

Population (1970): 9,858

Major Communities: Lead, Deadwood

Major Industries: Mining (gold), tourism, forestry, retail trade, and services

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State: Washington

School Districts: Quilcene School District,
Brinnon School District

Number of Pupils (1972-73): 341

Number of Schools (1972-73): 3

Per-Pupil Expenditure (CPI-Adjusted) (1972-72): $1,016

Location: In Jefferson County 26 miles south of Port Townsend, 40 miles west of Seattle, 47 miles southeast of Port Angeles

Area: 100 square miles

First Settlement: 1860

Population (1970): 1,998

Major Communities: Quilcene, Brinnon

Major Industries: Logging, oyster harvesting, government laboratories, tourism, retail trade, and services

State: Wyoming

School District: Carbon County School District No. 2

Number of Pupils (1972-73): 1,392

Number of Schools (1972-73): 12

Per-Pupil Expenditure (CPI-Adjusted) (1972-73): $1,329

Location: 130 miles south of Casper, Wyoming, 75 miles west of Laramie, Wyoming and 200 miles north of Denver, Colorado

Area: 4,300 square miles

First Permanent Settlement: 1868

Population (1970): 4,138

Major Communtities: Encampment, Riverside, Saratoga, Elk Mountain, Hanna, Elmo, Medicine Bow, McFadden, and Shirley Basin

Major Industries: Agriculture (sheep and cattle), extraction (coal, oil, and uranium), manufacturing (lumber mills), tourism, retail trade, and services

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HISTORICAL PATTERNS

The American frontier attracted all sorts of new people throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, but those who settled in one area or another during that period were primarily interested in only a few pursuits. Most were farmers, ranchers, loggers, or miners. Many were chiefly interested in acquiring large tracts of land while it was being offered cheaply--in some cases merely for the asking. On the whole, the ten school districts involved in the Experimental Schools rural program were settled by people looking for one or another of these possibilities.

The towns of Northumberland, Stratford and Stark that make up Supervisory Union 58 in Coös County, New Hampshire, the only northeastern school district in the project, were the first to be settled by Europeans among the ten project school districts. All three were granted charters between 1761 and 1764, which makes them three times as old as Craig, the youngest European settlement in the program. The fact that Coös County was settled at all is something of a marvel. The winters are long and severe; the growing season lasts barely from June to mid-September. In 1770, no roads could be found into or out of Coös. Wagons couldn't enter until after 1800, when a road through the White Mountain Notch was built. Settlers who wanted to go south had to travel by canoe on the Connecticut River--when it was open--or by oxcart on ice during months when the river was frozen over.

Understandably, the area now encompassing Union 58 developed slowly. By 1840, these three towns had a total population of less than 1,200 people. They were farmers for the most part, and they consumed most of what they produced. Trade was mostly by barter and the route south still arduous.

Railroads came to northern New Hampshire in 1840, and Coös County developed rapidly into a vigorous producer of lumber and wood products. The area's agricultural business also expanded as railroads enabled Coös County farmers to ship their products to the populous towns in southern Maine. With the comimg of the railroad, the milk industry also boomed, and at one time North Stratford had a large creamery which processed local milk and marketed it as far south as Boston, 200 miles away.

1840 to 1900 were productive and promising years for Coös County. After 1860, several saw mills were built in Groveton and they ushered in the logging era. These mills turned out millions of board feet of lumber,

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much of which was shipped by rail to the urban areas of New England. The Connecticut River became a source for large log drives which sent millions of board feet of spruce logs floating to mills in Massachusetts. These drives, held in the spring, when the river was high, were full of excitement for local people. Their celebrations, however, were short lived. The good fortunes of Coös County associated with lumbering peaked at the turn of the century.

After 1900, most accessible virgin timber had been cut. The towns of Stark and Stratford, both of which grew and prospered with the lumber industry, declined shortly thereafter. The White Mountains National Forest was established in 1911, restricting lumbering operations throughout northern New Hampshire. Technological developments also undercut several industries dependent on wood products. The development of cloth and paper bags, for example, closed a large "stave and heading" mill in North Stratford. Cardboard bobbins replaced wooden bobbins, and another area industry closed down.

Technology also took its toll in agriculture. As modern farming methods led to increased production and efficiency, marginal farming areas like northern New Hampshire became uneconomical. By 1900, two major industries of the area had peaked and begun their decline.

Northumberland, the third school district in Union 58, did not experience the same decline after 1900 because two paper manufacturing plants were located in the town between 1890 and 1910. Paper manufacturing--a process which can use a poor quality wood--took the place of lumbering and agriculture. Pulp and paper production became a vital industry, one which sustains the area to this day. In Stratford, after the Great Depression, the Brown Paper Company purchased the old stave and heading mill and began manufacturing plywood. But plywood did not pay as well as paper, and Stratford never again achieved its former level of prosperity. In 1970, even the plywood mill had closed in North Stratford, and the community lost its major source of employment. Foremen and managers left town, taking with them much of the area's leadership.

In their 200-year histories, the towns of Union 58 grew slowly and enjoyed brief "booms." Although they have more or less maintained themselves, they have not enjoyed the growth and prosperity that characterizes other areas of the country.

The history of Union 58, New Hampshire has many parallels in the nine other rural sites. Many localities share the historical tradition of using land in specialized ways for farming and lumbering until it no longer supported these special uses. Many were unable to find other economic uses for the land or to replenish it. When this happened, many farmers and loggers looked for new land, either in a nearby territory or further west. Perry County, Mississippi, is the only district in which land resources have been successfully replenished so that another generation could reap sizeable harvests. In the 1930's, the Civilian Conservation Corps sponsored massive reforestation procedures, a process that later significantly enhanced the county's economic condition.

The ecology of each area, then, tends to be as significant as early settlement patterns. Salmon runs in Craig, Alaska, for instance, were over-exploited, causing, in 1950, the collapse of large scale salmon fishing industry. As fishing and canning had been Craig's major industries, its population declined rapidly. In 1970, with 400 citizens, Craig has the lowest per capita income level of all ten districts.

Five school districts were once extremely rich in natural minerals. Craig, Alaska, Carbon County, Wyoming, Hancock County, Kentucky, Lead-Deadwood, South Dakota, and South Umpqua, Oregon still have a variety of accessible mineral resources; yet they are not rich, today, in those deposits. Gold and silver, coal, oil, copper, and iron are available, but none provide the communities with significant mining dependencies, with the exceptions of Lead-Deadwood and Carbon County where fully operational gold and coal mining, respectively, affect many aspects of community life.

Farming and ranching are still prime sources of income in nine of the ten districts, though only one of the nine (Willcox, Arizona) is involved in large-scale, competitive "agribusiness." The other eight are similar to Union 58, with extremely fertile land in the river valley but a surrounding terrain that is heavily forested. Ranching is full of similar problems. In South Umpqua, for example, the range land is not as rich as other range land available to huge ranching operations in the United States. More acres, therefore, are needed to feed fewer cattle than are needed in other more fertile areas. The area around Willcox, however, is considered by many to be the best range land in Arizona.

Two groups of people tend to dominate the early settlement of all ten school districts. One group appears to have been restless, on the move for bigger and better "opportunities." As soon as one area appeared to be drying up--or was apparently ready for profitable sale--this group moved on.

Another group approached each frontier with a wish for stability. They wanted to put down roots. Coos County maintained a slow but steady growth of such settlers. Opportunity for land speculation or quick fortune was not available. Four western districts, Carbon County, Craig, South Umpqua and Quilcene, Washington, were settled by people who felt the frontier had been reached. More than anything else, these settlers seemed to want to establish a stable society.

Most districts had two or three major economic attractions. Farming, of course, was the most prevalent. Two districts, however, were built up around one important natural resource. Craig subsisted almost entirely on its fishing industry and in Lead, the Homestake Gold Mine, still in operation today, was the sole reason for the town's establishment 100 years ago. Much of Lead real estate, for example, is rented or leased from the mine which runs under the town, prohibiting bedrock title to most of the land. Local citizens have discovered they can't get normal mortgaging through most banks because they can't fully own the land their houses are built on.

If a locality wasn't superbly suited to farming or some other industry during the opening of the frontier, it often sprang up simply because it was on the way to other lands further west. Willcox, Arizona, situated in the midst of semi-arid land, seemingly unsuited to agriculture, became a way station in 1858 for a stage route from St. Louis and Memphis to San Francisco. In 1878, the Southern Pacific Railroad Company began building its trans-continental track through Arizona. Company policy required the establishment of work camps every eight miles along the route. Today little remains of these small camps, except those which grew into towns--such as Willcox.

The early settlement of most of these communities was strongly influenced by the eventual arrival of women. In most cases, whenever a community was established (which generally meant that it had been made safe, transportation routes had been cleared, the means for making a living and housing provided) women were sent for. The arrival of women meant to any frontier town that a new phase was about to begin. Women meant families, homes, and children. Women meant "civilizing" the town. The arrival of women, and subsequently, children, also meant the establishment of schools.

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EARLY EDUCATIONAL PATTERNS

Rural schoolhouses generally served as community social centers where pie suppers, dances, Christmas pageants, barbecues, and public meetings were held. Beyond that, they symbolized the dawn of a neighborhood. They brought a change into the wilderness air.

The operation of a local school district served, importantly, as a way to educate people about the workings of local and county government, particularly in fiscal and political matters.

The first schools were small and isolated, serving, for the most part, individual neighborhoods within each county. To serve larger areas would have meant transporting children over many miles of rough terrain in a time when modern transportation was neither available nor imagined.

It is not surprising that the first of our districts to embark on public education is located in New England, where in 1647, Massachusetts enacted into law the first statewide concept of public education. In Coös County, town records report appropriations for public schooling from its earliest days (the 1760's) and regular school sessions also seem to have been conducted from the start. Many of the earliest schools in other districts were private and supported by tuition paid by local families. Private schools were usually in session a major part of the year. Once public education started, school sessions were shorter, often only 3 or 4 months of the year--a problem due in part to insufficient funds. Perry, South Umpqua, and Willcox all began with these abbreviated programs.

Some communities, on the other hand, moved quickly in the direction of long annual sessions. Constantine, Michigan, had a public school system, and twelve-month required attendance, only twenty years after its initial settlement.

School facilities expanded in most communities at the turn of the 20th century, a change that meant more for some communities than for others. Willcox, for example, has always replaced its school buildings at regular intervals and has the newest and most up-to-date facilities of all ten sites. At the other end of this spectrum, the four schools in Union 58 in New Hampshire were all built before 1917.

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Prior to the 1960's, however, most of these communities had spent nearly 40 years with a stable and fairly well protected way of life that enabled their schools to rest comfortably within the traditional confines of educational patterns accepted prior to the first world war. Self-contained classrooms, emphasis on textbook learning, low teacher turnover, small local schools, neighborhood school boards (mostly on a volunteer basis), defined for these rural communities an uncomplicated system for educating their children, one which they had enough confidence in to leave pretty much alone. For many families, the same teacher who taught the parents in grade school later taught their young children. These teachers, mostly women, were established figures in the town. Discipline for the youth of the community was rigidly controlled, with teachers and parents sharing conventional attitudes towards child rearing and social performance.

The 1960's brought to these ten districts some changes that have affected the expectations placed upon their schools. For several communities--Hancock, Constantine, Willcox, Quilcene, South Umpqua, and Carbon County--changes in the work force and types of occupational roles were required by new industries in their areas. Many of their citizens, it turned out, wanted to live "in the country" but without farming in a serious way. Rural non-farm residences became more popular than working a farm or living in a village. These families gradually began to vocalize their concern about educating their children in a way that would be responsive to their life expectations, expectations that did not necessarily include perpetuating a rural way of life.

Rural youth, during this time, slowly assimilated some of the attitudes of social rebelliousness prevalent during the mid-60's in urban centers. In Constantine, for instance, the young people were anxious during the early 70's to shed their "hick background" and assimilate in dress, speech, and political sentiment the "youth culture" that had filtered into rural areas.

This process of assimilation took time, with most children in these districts aware of the cultural lag between themselves and their urban peers. Although they are concerned about "catching up", as shown by their attempts to travel more, visit cities and purchase clothes, records and literature there, they are cautious. While many young people in these communities want to lessen the cultural distance to the cities around them, they do not necessarily want to live in urban environments. Some who think they do, in fact, often return.

Some, perhaps from a nostalgic wish to get back to their roots, live the way their parents wished them to. Others find it difficult to cope with an urban pace of life.

Currently, there is a sense of uneasiness, infringement, and frustration among these rural communities, coupled with some pride in rural ways, some conventional values that include a wistful yearning for the autonomous community that their forebears had sustained. As late as the 1920's, the self-sufficiency of many of these communities outweighed their dependence on the outside world for services and goods. Currently, however, changes in transportation, communications, mechanization, agricultural production, and integration of various levels of society have lessened their ability to maintain self-sufficiency.

National trends in education have also intruded on rural life. As their citizens have struggled to maintain individualism in the midst of economic diversification, and in the face of sociological transformation across the country, these communities have also confronted the necessity (they were told) of school district consolidation. More than the problems of their youth, district consolidation and economic changes (both discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter) have forced these communities to begin an internal dialogue over the future of rural education.

This dialogue had barely begun in 1972 when the Experimental Schools program was in its germination stage. All ten of these districts had minimum experience with federal funds in the field of education. ESEA Title I and III funds had been explored by almost all of the districts; Head Start programs had been initiated in several; but none of the federal funds coming into these districts were very large. For the most part, citizens felt that federal money was a mixed blessing, and they were wary of any outside influence determining for them the direction of their children's education. It was difficult, often, to determine the worth of a program when it had a federal label on it.

Several districts took great pride in their schools, placing a high value on education for their children. But some felt differently. It was not immediately apparent to them how a "modern" education or any prolonged period in a school system would benefit their children. Academic skills were recognized as important. But how could such an education make a child grow up to be a great fisherman, or even catch enough fish to make him competitive with the current

market? Education, it seemed to many, was not necessarily going to produce an aggressive crop of loggers, or farmers, or ranchers.

Prior to their selection in the Experimental Schools program, these districts were asked to enumerate the resources and problems in their educational systems. Their response, as stated in their letters of interest, indicate this conflict between what they thought to be happening in and vital to the rest of the world, and their urge to retain what they valued in their communities. "According to test results," one district responded, "many of our students are underachievers (particularly in reading and mathematics)."

On the same page one district lists its problem--"limited parental support," and "limited interest and understanding of citizens of educational needs"; and its resources--"some well-informed parents who press for a more relevant and productive educational program." This message might read, "There are some here who are concerned about the direction of our education and will be vocal advocates for change in our schools; but some here are ambivalent and will resist change and interference."

This is, perhaps, an age-old conflict, yet one that has particular meaning for small rural communities where voices are heard, for the most part, face-to-face, between people who are directly involved.

Several communities report that daily attendance in schools is low; the dropout rate is high; teacher turnover has drastically increased; there are limited curriculum offerings; inadequate financing; a high retention rate of underachievers with no appropriate programs to accommodate special needs. The plans that eventually emerged from these communities (Chapter Three) indicate a common goal for changes in these areas. Diversity in educational options is particularly needed in rural localities where there will always be some children equipped and anxious to go on to higher education, as well as a goodly proportion who will rapidly enter the work force--a rural work force at that.

CURRENT RURAL DILEMMAS

By 1972, when the Experimental Schools program issued its invitation to isolated rural communities, these ten school districts were facing a number of common rural dilemmas. First, they needed to solve the problem of economic planning--for many, economic survival. Second, they wanted to find ways to preserve their rural flavor, their life-style and work habits, while

meeting, at the same time, the demands of their youth, and in some cases, industrial promises or possibilities. Third, they had just emerged from a process of school district consolidation, a process which had left scars in each locality. Some needed to find ways to heal those wounds and make their newly consolidated districts work for each locality--to preserve local integrity.

Economic Changes

Through the sixties, the communities within these ten school districts experienced a series of ups and downs. Their economic development was influenced by two general trends: some communities hung on to one or two industries for their major economic sustenance, developing a single or narrow industrial base; others were more diversified, broadening their base of economic dependence.

Craig, Alaska, Union 58, New Hampshire, Perry County, Mississippi, and Lead-Deadwood, South Dakota, for example, changed very little during the 60's. They were all dependent on one or two major industries. Their lack of diversification has affected their growth and social attitudes.

The other six school districts have diversified their economies. Constantine, Michigan, for instance, depended on agriculture and small industry for many years. Its economy, consequently, fluctuated with the rise and fall of river and rail transportation. With changes in national patterns of life style and recreation, Constantine became a locale of new mobile home and recreation vehicle manufacturing plants, creating an entirely new industrial base.

Quilcene, Washington began its economic life as a logging, farming, and mining community. Then in the 1920's, the federal government built forest service and fish hatchery installations there, and these continue to affect the economic condition of Quilcene.

Willcox, Arizona began as a railroad community. Beginning in the early 1900's as farmers developed irrigation systems, their farming potential multiplied. By the 1960's, retirement communities and other service industries provided several other opportunities.

These ten school districts, as a result, face separate problems. Diversification offers, on the one hand, economic sustenance, especially during upheavals in industry. It also means industrial expansion, industrial work patterns, and the likelihood of losing valuable rural qualities--ecological balance and beauty, smallness, relaxation and independence.

Hancock County, Kentucky is a good example of a community growing rapidly due to industrial expansion but risking, in the bargain, a loss of a rural life style.

During the 1950's and 1960's, Hancock expanded its industrial sector consciously and successfully. Tile manufacturers, paper mills, and aluminum processing plants located on some of the higher ridges in the Ohio River bottoms. Seventeen hundred new jobs were created between 1960 and 1970. Hancock expanded. It expanded its dreams for economic diversity and an array of occupational options for its citizens. It also expanded its population and overnight was flooded with new families seeking housing and good public schools. The school system was not prepared for such a huge influx of new students and was overwhelmed. It also found itself answerable to new demands from industrial leaders that the school system be responsive to requests of new residents for modern educational programs.

Hancock, consequently, provides a unique testing ground for the Experimental Schools program. Of all the ten school districts, it has taken the initiative to revamp its school system while undergoing dramatic change in its socioeconomic patterns. In spite of problems and the concern of some that Hancock will lose more than it gains, Hancock is embracing change in several aspects of life.

Communities that have not diversified are more likely to retain their rural flavor, but face another problem--how to keep their youth content with a community life that offers few occupational options and meager economic reward.

Many rural communities experience a trend towards in-migration during national periods of inflation, recession, and depression. During the 1930's, for example, population expanded in all ten of these school districts. When higher paying "urban" jobs become scarce, urbanites seemed to want to return to a more basic way of life, living closer to the land. A parallel trend which may affect these ten localities seems to be occurring in the mid-1970's.

District Consolidation

Playing against these problems of economic expansion, and the wish to retain rural smallness and independence, has been a national trend towards consolidation of rural school districts. All ten districts have experienced consolidation controversies within the past several years.

Consolidation was conceived as an answer to the difficulties most rural communities share--raising the money needed to operate a modern school system. Consolidation, it is argued, can equalize resources available for education in different parts of rural counties. Consolidation can create a larger and more efficient school district. It can ease the problem of teacher recruitment. Because teacher salaries can be made competitive with larger school districts in the area, the pool of potential teachers may be larger, and the rate of turnover may decline.

This solution to the problems of these ten school districts, however, did not take into account the role small town schools often play in maintaining community identification. Schools are one of few remaining institutions over which there is still some local, rather than state or federal, control. Many high schools have become in the eyes of residents a symbol of community prestige. Athletic teams elicit a lot of excitement and loyalty from all generations. They have helped define local identity and have become important to rural cultural activity. To lose their schools, many feared, would be to lose this sense of local definition.

In the 1960's attempts were made by the state of New Hampshire to dissolve Union 58 and have the districts of Northumberland and Stark join with several other towns in forming a consolidated regional school district. This was resisted bitterly and successfully.

Carbon County, Wyoming has struggled with state-enforced consolidation more recently. Its problems are typical. Once the state announced its unification plans, the people in Carbon County were beset by a feeling of apprehension. There was widespread fear throughout Wyoming that the stipulation for unified districts to be divided into equalized trustee resident areas might give a greater measure of power and funding to more densely populated areas.

In 1969 a Wyoming state committee handed down a mandatory decision to consolidate Carbon County by December of 1971. Many issues riding on that decision were not solved until the spring and summer of 1972, the exact time of the Experimental Schools initiation. For Carbon County District No. 2, consolidation was a continuing issue while it was also trying to plan for comprehensive educational change in a federal program.

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While Hancock was dealing with industrial development and trying to cope with the social phenomenon that such development brings to rural life, Carbon was trying to cope with another threat to its rural attractiveness--a statewide political thrust into its local autonomy. The events in Hancock and Carbon are typical of problems in other rural communities, both in particular and as symbols of larger changes occurring in rural America.

Five other districts, Craig, Lead-Deadwood, Union 58, Quilcene, and South Umpqua, have found the process of consolidation divisive. In most cases, the divisiveness was caused by a sense of loss of local control and local identity.

IN SUMMARY

What are the effects of these developments, both in the communities at large and in their educational systems? Strong feelings towards local schools, similar to the support given various athletic programs, characterize a common community struggle. The people of these communities are loyal to their towns and to their history. They still place a high value on individualism.

Yet the rural tendency to exhaust land resources with little forethought for future generations and for the future life of the community, as seen in the early settlement patterns of these districts, has created obstacles to economic development in rural America. Some of these communities are determined to retain as much self-sufficiency as they are able, to restrict or prohibit economic diversification, and to keep aloof from urban living patterns. Others have come to sense the need to broaden their economic base and plan carefully the future of the community. These communities want to use outside resources to insure that they will be able to subsist with some degree of self-sufficiency--a strong feeling of individualism, and a pride in their accomplishments--without losing the rural flavor of their way of life.

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These ten rural school districts bring to the Experimental Schools program some common historical derivations and a number of similar current dilemmas. They share with other rural communities a struggle with school district consolidation, a need for increased efficiency, and educational improvement. Along with most of rural America, they remember and live in accordance with a traditional code they are reluctant to put aside.

Their geographic, demographic, ecological, economic, and social structures, however, are diverse. This diversity offers the Experimental Schools program an opportunity to observe the operations of educational change in a variety of settings that, in the conglomerate, represent a wide spectrum of rural communities.

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CHAPTER THREE

TEN PLANS: RURAL ANSWERS TO RURAL NEEDS

The Experimental Schools program emphasizes involvement of the "total school system" in any plan for comprehensive change. As a result, the ten proposals submitted by these small rural school districts are lengthy documents, a compilation of a great many distinctive plans for educational change, adding up to more than 1,000 pages in all.

These plans represent a response by local people to their own needs as they complied with the explicit instructions issued by the Experimental Schools program. These, then, are the final plans submitted after a year of planning, a time when the proponents for each plan tried to assess both community need, direction, and support, and the priorities of the federal government.

The Experimental Schools program wanted local people to pinpoint their own problems and then decide how to solve those problems. Each plan, consequently, was preceded by numerous meetings between community groups and school personnel. The plans, in sum, represent what ten rural school districts feel they most need and want in light of their perception of what the Experimental Schools program would support.

This chapter, a synthesis of these plans, takes as its voice the stance of the proponents for educational change in each community. The words used here are a summation of the words used by the authors of these plans when finally accepted by the National Institute of Education for funding under the Experimental Schools program.

AN OVERVIEW

This chapter contains a summary of central questions asked in each proposal and an explanation of how these communities planned to find answers.

The first section summarizes the goals these ten small rural school districts envisioned for themselves. What did they want for their students, their schools, and their communities?

The second section synthesizes how they planned to achieve their goals. It summarizes and compares the most significant proposals for change, discussing five central questions which the Experimental Schools program asked them to answer:

- What were their plans for curriculum change?
- How would they provide for teacher training?
- What provisions would be made for parents and other citizens to participate?
- In what different ways would they use their time, space and facilities?
- How would they adjust their school organizations, administration, and governance to effect lasting change?

The third section explains their plans for self-evaluation during the life of the project. What questions do they plan to ask in order to know how well they are achieveing their goals? To whom will these questions be addressed? How will they make use of their answers?

RURAL GOALS

In 1972, when the Experimental Schools program invited small rural school districts to participate in an experiment in comprehensive educational change, no attempt was made on the part of the federal government to define community or educational goals. The government was primarily interested in observing the process of change in each of these communities. Each community as a consequence, was asked to set its own goals. The government, in turn, would look over their shoulders to see what it could learn from them. In order to define what they wanted, each district asked itself three questions:

How would they like their children to be different?

These ten school districts, widely distributed over the United States, are in some respects as different from one another as they are different from typical urban and suburban communities. Yet they share a common concern, peculiar, they feel, to their rural situations. They

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report that their children, separated from the mainstream of American urban activity, often feel alienated, ignored, and irrelevant. Those who do graduate from high school find that their education, most often "traditional" and geared primarily for college preparation, has provided them with few skills they can use in the world of work and adult responsibilities most of them shortly enter.

Moreover, as life patterns outside their own communities have changed, they have not been helped to see their own environment as productive of individual success. In recent years, education has seemed irrelevant to life in their own communities. School has been a place to be, not a place to use. These ten districts wanted to make their schools more useful--particularly to those for whom the schools were designed, their children.

All ten school districts wanted their students to be better prepared--for life in the hometowns, or localities, but also elsewhere. They wanted their high school graduates to "master the skills necessary to participate in the shaping of our community's future". Preparation for adult and civic responsibility, and for the world of work is a central theme running through all ten projects. Their voices form a chorus:

> "Academic programs must have a purpose that each student can identify with."
>
> "Our schools will help each student select goals that bear directly on his future livelihood and happiness."
>
> "Our school system seeks the realization of improved pupil achievement and greater commitment and readiness for entry into the world of work or continuing formal education."
>
> "We want to offer students a comprehensive basics program to allow them to be competitive in modern day society upon graduation from high school."
>
> "We want to provide a relevant, comprehensive education for students which will prepare them for any vocational pursuits--a background to cope with living in this area or any other area of their choice."

Recognition that students need to be better prepared for the world of work opened the door to more specific goals for rural students.

- Several districts felt that an early educational program should foster self-confidence, a necessary prerequisite, they pointed out, to success.

- Many stressed an individualized curriculum throughout the K-12 programs in order to fit specific studies to individual goals.

- Nearly all wanted basic skills: reading, writing, and arithmetic--solidly built into each child's background in order to prepare him for all opportunities beyond school.

- Rural isolation, many pointed out, often precluded participation in urban cultural opportunities. They wanted more cultural enrichment programs for their students in order to broaden their scope and perception of life.

- Finally, they wanted to initiate programs that would help students who had not previously experienced educational success.

How would they like their schools to be different?

Almost all the communities had previously organized their educational program through traditional "self-contained classrooms," especially at the elementary level. They wanted to expand the components of these programs to include a wider choice for every student. As one plan stated:

> "Many students have little conception of life outside our county because they have had few travel experiences. Our instructional program has been contained in our classrooms. Outside of varsity athletics, the community and the school have little contact."
>
> Their goal: "To develop curriculum where students use community resources and travel experiences to gain a more realistic perspective of life."

This is a central theme--expansion of the learning process. Expansion, for these communities, meant many things. On the one hand, they wanted to open the walls of the classroom to include a greater visionary perspective for students. They wanted to expose their students to a larger environment than previously associated with school work in those communities. Every community saw its natural environment as a primary

source for this expansion. They could see that by using their environment as a classroom, they would be serving two purposes. They would offer students a relevant, varied program in which to practice classroom skills; and they would prepare children for life in their home communities.

Secondly, they wanted to expand the subject matter taught in the classroom to include appropriate material that would make studies more relevant to rural life. Materials used to teach basic skills needed, they felt, to be brought closer to home so that children could make a connection between their education and their life outside of school.

Finally, they wanted to expand their teaching methods to include a range of possibilities for different personalities and learning methods. Their schools, some felt, had been too tightly structured. Teachers often felt locked into programs and curricula which had come to be the end-all in instruction.

> "Our faculty was concerned that they were narrow in their approaches to teaching children and were locked into their curriculum area. For example, high school math teachers did not know what teachers were doing at other instructional levels or in other academic areas. They needed to share their program with other staff members."

Most schools wanted to re-examine their method and style of teaching in order to improve their ability to meet the needs of individual children head on. If, for example, 30% of their high school students went on to college, those children ought to get a solid preparation for college work. On the other hand, those who did not go on to higher education ought to have a total school program, K-12, which prepared them for other options. This meant, several districts pointed out, that teachers and school administrators would have to spend more time and effort <u>early on</u> to offer interesting and practical instruction. Several districts expressed a desire to break down old fashioned concepts of the sort that inhibit personal involvement--from teachers and students--in schooling.

Getting rid of inhibiting systems and styles, they felt, was only the beginning. These school districts wanted to find new ways. They took a year to examine their options and independently found a few common paths to explore:

- Reorganization of scheduling in order to accommodate new courses (vocational, outdoor education, cultural enrichment programs) and new ways of teaching basic skills.

- Establishment of training programs for their own teachers and staff.

- Restructuring of communication channels in order to facilitate change in all aspects of the school program.

How would they like their communities to be different?

Extending instruction into the community is one way to bring communities into the school system. Rural school districts are diffuse, covering wide expanses of land, serving people who live miles from each other with no public transportation. Several districts noted that their citizens felt either apathy or alienation towards their schools. Many felt their Experimental School Project would provide a motivational opportunity for schools to involve their entire community in change.

Most school districts agreed that community involvement was vital to the success of the whole program. They planned to use their localities in many ways and, most important, they wanted to give something back in return:

- They planned to keep their communities more informed on the issues and happenings within the school system.

- They planned to seek out citizens to serve as members of various advisory boards during the lifetime of the project.

- They planned to use their citizens as evaluators.

- They wanted to make the whole educational system and its facilities more open to the public, more available for a greater number of people of all ages.

- They wanted to increase community interaction through extracurricular activities and shared materials.

- They wanted the adult population to come into the schools and share their expertise; and they wanted the students to go out in the community and learn through "on-the-job" experiences.

- They wanted community representatives to take an active part in the governance of the system.

Goals, of course, can remain visionary. They are certain to if careful consideration is not given to an implementation program. The bulk of the proposals include detailed explanations of ways the school districts plan to achieve their goals.

Individual plans differ, of course, due to problems and aspirations unique to one or more school districts. A district located 50 miles from the Gulf of Mexico is likely to have different priorities than an island in Alaska. A district with a population of ten thousand people will have different ways of working together than a village with only 300 residents. One district is situated near the Canadian border; another near the Mexican--cultural assimilation and environmental demands affect those populations in different ways.

Nevertheless, all ten plans, as a body, have noticeable cohesiveness, due perhaps to their determination to have their schools prepare children for adult life. The proposals have a common theme--"let our children be prepared."

The following section synthesizes these rural school districts' attempts to answer the question: how can we achieve our goals?

Curriculum Options

The plans express a desire for change in eight significant curriculum areas: career education; outdoor education; cultural enrichment programs; basic skills; counseling programs; early childhood and adult education programs; health and physical fitness; and diagnostic teaching methods.

Four of the eight curriculum changes were proposed by all ten school districts. These four are integral to the central preparedness theme of the project and were proposed with a high level of detail and a strong expression of need. Some districts, of course, provided more detail throughout their plans than others did. The following proposals are listed, consequently, in an order which reflects their proportionate emphasis--in terms of detail and expression of need--in each individual plan even though the authors of some plans defined their projects more carefully than others.

Career Education. All districts wanted to give their students at least a sampling of career experiences, enough to acquire some direction and a realistic understanding of the vocational opportunities and requirements involved. Different localities, of course, had different options, depending on what industries and natural resources were available. Forestry, farming, fishing, manufacturing, mechanical engineering, and business education ranked high in their plans. Whatever the local industries, the schools wanted to make use of them.

Most districts saw a gradual progression from elementary to secondary levels of experiences.

> "We hope to develop in the elementary school child concepts of self-awareness and identity useful in a work oriented society."
>
> "Junior high students will be exposed to a variety of career options."
>
> "Secondary school students will receive special training through exploratory courses, and an opportunity to develop skills likely to be helpful in training at post-secondary levels."

A few districts proposed job clinics; others planned to publish "human resource" directories in order to match employers and employees; almost all planned to expand guidance counseling to provide greater vocational testing, offer employment information, and help students plan for careers.

Many districts proposed "mini-courses" at the secondary level in order to allow students to explore new alternatives. In this way, students would no longer have to commit themselves to a whole semester in one trade, and could afford to sample several possibilities in the space of one year.

One district decided to establish a "Career School" as part of a four-school organization.

> "If a student decides he does not wish to obtain a high school diploma, he may enter the Career School without the basics and work toward obtaining an employable skill... An older, out-of-school learner who may have dropped out or graduated from high school may enter the Career School anytime there is an opening."

Another community wanted its newly instituted counseling program to stress "specific vocational skills needed for the job market".

Career education stands out as a major curriculum change for these school districts. They saw new vocational programs as a way to satisfy an overwhelming need to prepare rural children more thoughtfully and more practically for a competitive society. How deeply they feel about this is indicated by their careful articulation that a comprehensive career education program should be a serious and vital component of their whole school system, from kindergarten to the twelfth grade.

Outdoor Education. Outdoor educational programs were proposed for a number of reasons. Local wildlife, forest reserves, and other environmental locales could be used as a means of expanding classroom confines; as a laboratory for the application of basic skills; and for instruction on the problems of community responsibility for natural resources. Use of these native locales, most schools believed, would guide their children into a vision of their own community setting as a source of learning, pleasure, and adult satisfaction.

> "Outdoor experiences will begin at the kindergarten level with an Outdoor Laboratory. The 6th grade will take part in a Wilderness program. Beyond this students may elect more advanced outdoor experiences: the 7th and 8th grade can elect an exploratory program; independent study will be offered at the high school level. High school students can also take part in a leadership program which will train them to assist in the elementary outdoor program."

Another community set five representative goals for itself:

- Development of an outdoor area for use as a laboratory.
- Programs for the use of areas already developed.
- The chance for students to learn vocational skills through work on construction and maintenance of outdoor sites.
- Study of environmental problems and man's role in solving them.
- Use of their environment in programs that offer children opportunities to develop skills in communications, decision making, and problem solving.

One school district planned to build and maintain a nature trail as part of its environmental studies. Junior high students would be assigned the task of building the trail. They planned to make benches, put up signs, clear a pathway for the trail, cover it with bark mulch, and produce a guide booklet for distribution.

An important aspect of these outdoor education programs as they were expressed in the plans is that they have been perceived as a comprehensive component. They were planned to service all proposed curriculum changes and objectives. Furthermore, it was pointed out that they could be related to each community's resources--resources peculiar to their isolated locality and essential to their self-esteem.

Cultural Enrichment Programs. Isolation and difficult terrain meant that these communities often were estranged from their state and area cultural programs.

> "Our geographic isolation, particularly in the winter months, has made it difficult for us to develop cultural programs. No community has sufficient population to attract touring artists, and there are no theaters, concert or exhibition halls. The long distances over rugged mountain terrain to cities which may have attractive musicals, artists' exhibitions, theater presentations, frequently prohibit or prevent attendance at these functions."

Whatever the terrain, the need was the same. All schools were eager to include musical skills and appreciation in their "cultural enrichment" program. Most planned to introduce a variety of programs--country music, folk and rock music, orchestral and choral, hoping that aspects of popular culture might help in attempts to teach basic skills.

They planned to design workshops for their staff and students, seek nearby university personnel as consultants, and hoped to acquire multi-media facilities that would bring urban experiences into their rural environments.

They wanted their students to acquire skills in a variety of arts and crafts, both for reason of aesthetic appreciation and practical training.

> "The basic arts and crafts program is designed to cover art history, proper design techniques, texture, color, perspective and visual effects. Our students will be exposed

to tools, techniques, methods, and means. Students had more initiative and resourcefulness. The resources are available but the students do not know how to use them."

One community planned several "minor cultural events" in order to expose their children and the rest of the community to the living arts.

"We will sponsor a series of cultural activities--including drama, poetry, dance recitals, art exhibitions, mime, puppetry, folklore, and crafts."

Environmental programs, it was felt, could help children become aware of their responsibility to their community and its natural resources. Cultural programs, they hoped, would offer children a sense of the enjoyments they could find in their own localities. Furthermore, as they developed their own talents, they hoped they would see their children develop a stronger sense of self and community worth.

These communities, many cut off from the rest of the world by forests and mountains, could accept the inevitable absence of an art gallery. But, they wondered, could a program that offered facilities and space to develop a local ceramics shop recoup a measure of artistic pride? Rural crafts needed to be given more prestige and space in their schools, and these programs were seen as a beginning.

Basic Skills. Several communities noted that their students tested below the national average. They wanted to update their programs so that teachers throughout the elementary and secondary levels had some understanding of what others were doing and how one area of learning could be used within another.

They proposed to use a variety of language arts and math programs, packaged by national publishing houses. Teachers would help each other master the intricacies of these programs. Frequent pupil testing and remedial programs were built in to each proposal.

In keeping with a major theme of "personalized" teaching, plans were made to allow each student to meet various levels of learning at his or

her own speed. Elaborate recording systems were envisioned by some in order to keep track of each student's progress--a process made more complicated, they felt, once a standardized curriculum was dropped.

One community planned to create a "Basics School", an ungraded individualized program.

> "The Basic School will serve all students. It will teach reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies. Any one who has not developed minimum competence in these areas will be enrolled. Age is not a criterion."

The Experimental Schools program could help these communities revamp their basic skill programs in at least one fundamental way: they wanted to build up their libraries and resource centers so that the teachers could use primary source material in language arts; so that children could use multi-media materials to spur interest and provide new ways of learning. Basic skills had always been a part of their schooling. But it had not always been a successful component. All the plans recognized that children had to master basic skills in order to be competitive in a world that required those skills.

The above four curriculum changes stand out in the plans as major needs. The following four were emphasized by some but not all of the districts. Within a particular plan personal development programs, early childhood and adult education programs, health and physical fitness programs and/or diagnostic teaching methods may be presented as central to the Experimental Schools Project. When this occurs, however, it is an exception. For each of the following, in fact, no more than two plans proposed these curriculum changes as a central theme or as a major component of their project. Several others, nevertheless, included programs in one or more of the following areas as part of their plans. These components are listed in order of their occurence in all of the plans.

Personal Development Programs. Several plans stressed that parents and teachers felt many children in these rural communities had very low opinions of themselves. Although they often lived 100 miles from the nearest city, and worlds away from urban life, their children were growing up exposed to television. Their own lives seemed pale in contrast

to what they saw happening on television screens. They needed to feel more important--more hopeful that they could have the same range of aspirations as their urban peers.

These school districts wanted to help their children relate more positively to adults, other children, their schools, and to the larger community. In order to encourage this process, they built into their curriculum a variety of counseling services, activities, and group experiences:

- They proposed to offer courses in family life and community living at the elementary and secondary level.
- They wanted to rekindle through special projects an interest in their community's history.
- They proposed counselor-training for their staff so that teachers could offer students special forms of support.
- Some schools proposed systems of "peer counseling", in attempts to get older students involved with younger.
- Some wanted programs that would help students select and carry out leisure time activities.

Early Childhood and Adult Education Programs. Several districts wanted to include preschool programs for three and four year old children. Since this was often difficult because of the distances between homes and the necessity of busing very young children for long periods, two communities wanted to take preschool programs to the children in vans. Others wanted to offer a limited program, two or three times a week, in existing elementary buildings.

Adult education programs in arts and crafts, and other useful studies of local interest were planned by some in order to service the larger community and involve them more directly as beneficiaries of the Experimental Schools Project.

Diagnostic Teaching Methods. Although all school districts stressed the need for an individualized teaching approach in classrooms, two of the plans proposed a specialized method of insuring this process.

> "Diagnostic teaching is a process by which teachers assess the needs, abilities, and interests of students through a series of professional decisions. Teachers then use these findings to design more meaningful learning experiences in terms of needs, abilities and interests of each child."

Diagnostic teaching, once in operation, offers teachers a series of check-points of student progress. That is, from the kindergarten program on through high school, students are tested and exposed to a variety of professional assessments which assist teachers' analysis and indicate where programs need to be adjusted to meet individual student needs. Plans called for specialized personnel--guidance counselors, psychologists, remedial teachers--to work with teachers and students at crucial periods.

This process, it was felt, could be very helpful in a community with increasing population--particularly so if the newcomers were arriving from more worldly school systems. Diagnostic teaching methods would offer rural teachers a bonus--they could greet new families with a specialized system that would insure a program specifically prescribed for their children.

Health and Physical Fitness Programs. A few communities, particularly one with little in the way of health care personnel (doctors, registered nurses or the like), felt that health care would be beneficial to the whole community if it could be built into the school system. These communities also wanted to include a strong physical fitness component.

> "We will familiarize the students and the community with information on the various health problems in our area that are a direct or indirect result of lack of physical fitness training. We hope that such a program will promote healthier students; combating our high absenteeism--primarily due to improper health care and inadequate physical development."

* * *

Curriculum revision, all schools agreed, was central to any plan for comprehensive change. Their plans, consequently, are largely devoted to descriptions of specific courses, tiemtables, and methods to be used in the above eight major curriculum areas.

Most schools clearly felt that the more exact they were in working out this aspect of the Experimental Schools proposal, the greater their change of accomplishing goals and meeting needs defined by their citizens.

One aspect of the plans which does not show itself in the above listing of curriculum changes is the emphasis all ten districts place on the values inherent in all curriculum areas. In their attempts to be more responsive to non-college bound children, they wanted to make it clear that students who chose alternative educational paths would be respected and allowed to develop a strong sense of their own worth and abilities.

Each of the curriculum areas, in addition, were intended to be consistent with and supportive of each other. Considerable planning, therefore, went into attempts to weave the teaching of basic skills, for instance, into environmental studies or cultural projects. Curriculum changes were meant to show students how they could use what they were learning as well as offer them interesting ways in which to learn.

Faculty and Staff--Retraining and Adaptation

Educational change, according to these plans, could only take place with the cooperation of faculty and staff. Some plans indicate a greater awareness of the burden to be placed on teachers and other staff than others. Most proponents of the plans realized, however, that their staff was going to be more visible than ever before. School children were certain to be curious about a new and varied classroom schedule; parents were going to be watching carefully, and having their say, in some cases, about what was happening in the school buildings. So teachers, it was felt, had to be alert. Some plans indicate a systematic effort to help teachers feel positive about the changes. The most ambitious and clearly written plans show an awareness of a need for teachers to feel the changes called for would prove good for them too. Most plans, at the least, proposed some programs to help teachers come to understand what they would be doing during the life of the Experimental Schools program and why.

At the planning level, teachers and administrators had an opportunity to state problems and suggest ideas. Usually, the authors of the plans point out, there was a range of interest in the project--some very enthusiastic, some ambivalent, some suspicious. The master plans, in response to these feelings and to the stipulations of the Experimental Schools program, propose a variety of support structures designed to provide teachers and other staff

with an orientation to new programs, new teaching methods, new ways of handling interdepartmental and community communication and the like.

Inservice Workshops. All proposals included in-service workshops for faculty. These workshops were intended as short term training sessions in specific approaches to instruction. Some were to be conducted by outside consultants; others by teachers within the system who had special training in one or another of the relevant academic areas. Some workshops were proposed in an effort to facilitate team teaching techniques or coordinate the curriculum in all disciplines. Math teachers, for instance, could be made aware of current happenings in the language arts so that students could benefit from a coordinated program.

Summer Sessions. Summer programs in the district were proposed for staff to receive a concentrated planning and instructional program. Some communities saw these sessions as times to acquaint teachers with new materials. Others planned to teach new methods of instruction. Still others focused on career education, or other major new components of the curriculum.

University Studies. A few districts hoped to benefit from the proximity of a nearby college or university, whose department of education might help them either set up local summer workshops or provide special on-campus training for selected teachers. Budgets were provided to cover such programs for four summers.

Extended Contracts and Released Time Provisions. Many districts planned to extend their teacher contracts at the beginning and end of the school year in order to send some teachers to workshops or use them in the reorganization and planning of the project.

A form of "released time" was also built into several of the programs. Teachers were to be paid for days they used to visit other classrooms, schools, and districts. In this way teachers might see how other teachers adapt their talents to new teaching methods and become acquainted with problems other than their own.

Use of Aides and Paraprofessionals. Because teachers' time and talents were to be taxed heavily, the plans proposed that they receive some classroom help. Some districts set up volunteer programs in an attempt to involve parents and other local people in the schools and use them as a resource in such programs as career guidance, outdoor education, and the arts.

Many districts wanted to hire a variety of instructional and clerical aides to relieve teachers of paper work and additional classroom demands during the early implementation of the program.

One school system decided to select certain teachers as "helping teachers". They would be paid additional salaries, work three to four weeks longer than the regular schedule, and serve as consultants to other teachers throughout the building.

Some districts wanted to use student tutors: older, more skilled, students trained by teachers to assist younger children in individualized studies.

Video-tapes. A few districts wanted their teachers to video-tape themselves when they were teaching, then review the tapes later for self-evaluation and sometimes team discussions. They hoped that in this way teachers would see their own weaknesses more clearly and would strive to adjust their style of teaching to the goals of the project.

Staff Development Center. One district proposed the establishment of a center for teachers in the district to use as a mini-college.

> "Teacher training institutions currently lack flexibility to supply our staff with training that speaks directly to these changes of the Experimental Schools Project. A district center will design regular programs of training and assistance to meet our specific needs."

Media Centers. Most of these rural districts wanted to establish media or resource centers. These centers were planned as a major resource for teachers, who could use them to become familiar with new materials, to share valuable selected materials, to discover materials for students' special needs, and to propose acquisitions. Media center personnel could provide, they felt, valuable advice and experience in disseminating materials. Some districts planned to use them for a variety of staff development functions--orientation programs, workshops, and self-evaluation seminars.

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In keeping with a philosophy of individualized instruction, media centers could provide teachers with another means for offering exploratory study to independent learners. Several communities wanted their teachers to use them as student libraries of a special sort--students would be allowed time to work in the centers, on materials prescribed for them, at their own speed. In this way, several plans pointed out, students who were ready could reinforce their sense of self-esteem through independent learning, and teachers could be free to spend more time with students who were experiencing difficulty.

* * *

Substantial support for teachers had to come, however, from the community--and from each teacher's private commitment to try something new. These intangibles the plans could not provide. The above eight support structures represent, simply, an attempt to build into the Experimental Schools program a number of essential supports for their staff. All ten proposals reflect an understanding that most rural teachers had walked a lonely road too long.

In keeping with the criteria set down by the Experimental School program each school system planned to turn to its communities for help in assessing its needs and strengths. Plans were made to include parents and other citizens in various committee assignments which were intended to help a wide range of citizens feel a part of the program. In addition, the proponents of the plans felt community participation would give schools the benefit of widespread cooperation.

- All ten plans intended to establish advisory bodies to meet regularly and provide interested members of the community with access to school personnel.
- Most districts planned to provide specific openings on governing bodies so that many segments of the community could be represented.
- Most districts suggested that ad hoc committees be formed wherever and whenever a use for them arose.
- Several districts planned to invite the community to help in its evaluative programs--answering questionnaires, providing criticism and the like.

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Providing spaces within the organizational network of the schools was, however, generally a minor thrust in a strong effort to solicit community interest. What the school districts really needed--much more than friendly advice--was help, in a very physical way. Most districts, consequently, tried to balance their school's needs with those of the community. One way to accomplish this was through the development of human resource banks for use in the school and, in return, offering special programs in the schools for all sectors of the community.

Human Resource Services. Every district needed volunteers. They needed them to carry out new programs and to help teachers during initial periods of the program which were bound to be exhausting and, sometimes, trying. Most of the plans called for four specific volunteer programs:

- Classroom aides to lend a helping hand wherever needed.
- Worksite supervisors for many new vocational and environmental programs.
- Chaperones for field trips and summer camping programs.
- Career counselors, gathered from local industries, for new vocational and guidance programs.

The plans indicate that most school districts hoped volunteer programs would serve a dual purpose--provide additional resources for new programs and initiate broader communications with the adult community. Some communities hoped that by having more parents and other citizens in the school buildings at various times, they could help bridge the generation gap.

> "What was once a natural order for families has ceased to exist even in rural communities. The disappearance of the extended family has deprived many children of the opportunity to develop helpful relationships with older adults."

Special Programs. If many citizens were going to work hard for better schools, something had to be offered the community for services rendered. Most communities noted that rewards had to be tangible and more immediate than the general appearance of happier or more knowledgeable students. All plans give evidence of a sense of responsibility to the community.

"In isolated rural communities, the school is a major social institution (the only one with any resources) and as such, it should accept a large share of the responsibility for the quality of life within the community. We suggest the very nature of the small community makes it necessary for schools to provide a greater variety of experiences than would ordinarily be found here."

The Experimental Schools program, many school districts decided, could provide an opportunity to show their communities how the schools could directly service young and old. Many of the school districts, for example, embraced farming communities with special needs and schedules.

"In a farming community, summer is an incredibly busy time for adults. Many men and women work sixteen to eighteen hours a day. Before the mechanization of farming, even the youngest child could be helpful. With the arrival of modern equipment younger children can rarely make a contribution. In our community this often means that children are left to their own resources for many hours a day. This is particularly true where both fathers and mothers work."

The following four programs, most commonly proposed in the plans, are outgrowths of this specifically rural need.

Summer programs for children, teachers, and interested and available adults were proposed. They included outdoor educational activities, remedial work for students, retraining workshops for teachers, and enrichment programs for adults.

"Because of our geographical location, three distinct climatic regions span a distance of only two hundred miles. Though it is easily accessible, many of our students reach high school age without having ever visited the Pacific Ocean....This provides us with an opportunity to study a new environment first hand....Students will travel by bus to a state operated visitation camp....Two groups at a time will live for five days at a camp to study the coastal zone. The students will fish, gauge tides, record temperatures and wind velocity, dissect sea animals, study plankton, collect driftwood, visit a Coast Guard station and have fun creating seascapes and sand sculptures."

Recreational programs of all kinds were expanded to include more people in the community--children during the summer months, adults during the winter. Senior citizen needs were surveyed by some; time and facilities were also to be made available for their activities.

Certain curriculum changes, such as an environmental education component, might attract, it was proposed, a number of skilled workers (lumberman, foresters, fishermen, etc.) and community leaders into special programs--camping trips, on-the-job experiences, travel and so on.

Finally, adult education classes were seen as a magnet for community involvement. Through these courses, and other recruitment drives, several districts sought to attract citizens who had never graduated from high school, especially young adults who had recently dropped out but hoped to finish their education.

The proponents of the plans hoped that these proposals would coordinate the efforts of the whole community in making the Experimental Schools program all-embracing. Even if their plans for a broader approach to the education of all citizens were not as successful as the architects of these plans hoped, one consequence, they were sure, would follow--the schools would be more visible in the community as new programs were initiated and expanded out into the localities. Some response seemed bound to be forthcoming.

New Ways of Using Time, Space, and Facilities.

Most communities planned to make school facilities open to community use in more ways than had previously been the case. Recognizing that school buildings were vital resources, sometimes the only solidly-constructed, flexible facilities available for community use, most school districts agreed to make them available to a number of community groups on an "after hours basis." This was an important "show of faith." A community drama group, for example, that had struggled for years suddenly found a high school auditorium available to them, as well as resources for advertising and promotion.

Many schools planned to open their media centers to the public. Much of the material purchased through the Experimental Schools funding could be given broader use, the plans point out, if it could be used by other groups and individuals.

"The Media Centers will be opened at 7:30 a.m. for students and teachers to use their resources before school begins. They will remain open till 5:00 p.m. during regular school days. The Middle/High school facilities will be open two evenings a week."

Many districts had a hard time scheduling curriculum changes. They wanted to find time for many new programs without cutting short what they already had established. It was easier to expand their use of time--through summer programs and later weekday hours--than to restructure, sensibly and with a sense of innovation, existing schedules. Several schools planned, nevertheless, to make use of "mini-course" concepts, "block scheduling", elective programs on special days ("Friday electives"), and to eliminate semester scheduling. One community planned to change their course commitments at specified times, called "opening dates".

Most of the buildings in each school system had been constructed to service traditional self-contained classrooms. One way of converting limited space into versatile space was to construct "learning centers" within each classroom. A few communities wanted to use media centers to create learning cubicles and rotate materials so that individualized programs could benefit.

The most significant change in attitudes toward the use of existing space could be said to lie in plans to expand classrooms by including the outdoors. Many communities had never thought of their natural terrain as a learning laboratory before, though once the concept surfaced, the possibilities seemed suddenly limitless. Not only could they use space differently, but "school time" could mean all hours of the day and all days of the week. Programs could extend into weekends, vacations, and summers.

New programs, of course, meant new uses of some space. Someone had to push over to make room for preschool and adult education programs. Several communities, however, had left over space they were only too happy to turn over to art and career workshops, or to preschool and adult education programs.

A few communities felt that traditional time-credit systems of matriculation were obsolete, and planned to eliminate the four-year high school concept altogether. A student ready to go on to adult responsibilities before that time, they felt, should be able to make alternative

scheduling arrangements, and earn a high school diploma in advance of others in the same curricular track. This would prove, they felt, a striking innovation in several rural areas where students were needed for full-time employment at an early age. Even so, these same students eventually needed a diploma in order to pursue further education or new employment possibilities.

Many communities planned to help teachers find time to plan for these various changes without straining tight schedules to the breaking point.

> "We will alter schedules in order to provide time for teachers and administrators to participate in Consulting Groups and in-service training activities. As soon as the plan is ready for implementation, students will be dismissed one afternoon every two weeks to provide additional flexibility for the staff in terms of planning and meeting."

Rural communities often found it difficult to conduct after-school activities because children had to be bused long distances to their homes. Two plans called for <u>after-school bus runs</u> to and from outlying farming areas so that students could participate in various enrichment activities... musical programs, athletics, clubs, environmental projects.

Two plans called for "<u>interim periods</u>", usually a week, when students might pursue individual studies or projects. Afterwards students would be asked to evaluate their use of time and facilities.

One plan summed up the dream of many for expanding the facilities, space, and time of each school system.

> "A major goal of this project is the development of a school curriculum in which the boundaries of the classroom are unlimited. A community-life centered curriculum is the extension of the natural learning environment, with the school classroom serving as a coordinating center for a variety of experiences. In this curriculum the community and the school move closer together as resources are shared cooperatively. Within the community and beyond, travel is an integral part of the goal. It is an effective tool for developing awareness, exploring ideas and interests, building skills and generally bringing the student into a better perspective with his world."

Organization, Administration and Governance

The Experimental Schools program presented many of these communities with a dilemma--how could the existing administrative and governing bodies oversee the project without taxing already overworked individuals and upsetting long established lines of command? All communities had school boards already weighed down with responsibility. Every district had a superintendent--also overworked.

> "Small rural districts have traditionally faced one major problem in administration which large urban districts haven't had to contend with--the scope of administrative responsibility. Small district school personnel find themselves trying to be 'all things to all people'. The result is often a very superficial kind of involvement in all phases of educational management and leadership. This makes the sharing of decision-making authority most difficult. It would be unrealistic to copy the complex administrative hierarchy typical of a large district. For example, a rural system could hardly justify assistant principals in each building or assistant superintendents for each major area of district services. We need a different type of organization."

The Experimental Schools program permitted these districts to experiment with some possible answers. At the planning stage each district had discovered parents and citizens willing to express strong interest--a real community voice. The problem was how to keep those parents and citizens involved. The first step in that involvement would come with the assignment of those most dedicated to some sort of administrative body.

Many districts, therefore, planned to reorganize their governing bodies so as to embrace two separate functions: advisory and decision making.

Advisory committees were designed primarily to keep a flow of communication going between school district and school staff. They could also function, however, as a means of assuring school personnel that the Experimental Schools Project was working. Through knowledgeable reports from these committees, school staff could modify its plans in any way thought practicable.

For the first time, some districts made provisions for students to serve on steering committees. Students were to be elected to represent their peers on all sorts of ad hoc committees, advisory councils, and administrative cabinets.

0059

The decision-making arms of these systems were accountable to their elected school boards and superintendents. Several school districts had discovered teachers who were dissatisfied and otherwise alienated from the lines of command. The plans reflect an attempt to bridge that gap and provide for administrative functions by using teachers in vital governing, evaluating, and coordinating roles. No school district could afford to hire extra help for all the governing jobs necessary. So this system of placing teachers, parents, and students on committees to oversee the implementation of the project could serve a dual purpose.

One community set up a curriculum cabinet in order to review proposals that came in from advisory councils or individual teachers.

> "The cabinet's major function will be to screen all curriculum proposals to determine if they fit into the comprehensive program, if they can be evaluated, and if they are feasible."

Most districts planned to hire extra help, nonetheless. As most superintendents were given the additional job of being project director, supplemental help was needed in the ranks just below superintendent level. Several school districts therefore hired a project assistant. In this way the superintendent of schools maintained direct authority and responsibility for the project but delegated considerable detail work to his assistant, a post planned only for the duration of the project.

RURAL JUDGMENTS

The federal government's prime objective in funding these ten isolated rural school districts for a five-year experimental project was to obtain knowledge from each district and, together, from all districts, so that rural communities all over the United States could benefit. It was for this reason that they arranged for Abt Associates to study the program.

But the government also felt it important for each district to study itself during the course of the five years. In this way the districts could keep track of whether their plans were working, and make changes when they seemed necessary. For this reason, each school district was required by the Experimental Schools program to plan an on-going evaluation program in order to answer, for themselves, the question: how will we know if we are achieving our goals?

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Each school district was asked to provide, at the outset, procedures that would help them evaluate themselves. Four basic evaluative steps were to be established at each site:

A System for Self-evaluation

Districts planned to have parents, teachers, students, and staff take part in evaluative procedures. Some planned to use frequent student, teacher and parent questionnaires. Some planned to train teachers to use attitudinal and basic skill testing materials. Social workers, guidance counselors, and occasionally psychiatrists were needed. School districts anticipated that this kind of support personnel could help teachers as they encountered special problems.

Teacher workshops were proposed. They were designed for group discussion of new teaching methods and styles. Teachers and administrators were to be asked to file annual reports on the progress of the programs they were involved in.

A few districts planned to hire professional consultants to help them with their evaluations; but for most, the process was to be an internal affair.

Districts planned to conduct comparative studies from year to year in order to measure progress made since the program began.

> "The local evaluator will examine component records, conduct visitations and/or interviews to assess how these activities have been met and will make recommendations for further program development."

Interpretation and Use of Evaluative Results

At periodic intervals, appropriate personnel planned to collate material gathered at the grass roots level. Decisions about the success or failure of various programs couldn't be postponed. In this way, on-going evaluation meant useful innovation during the life-time of the project, not just at the end.

> "The local evaluator will conduct a longitudinal study to determine if high school students involved in the Language Arts program continue their education as participants in the Adult Education program."

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Dissemination of Results

The community-at-large, and the teachers, needed to know how things were going and what was to be done about aspects of the program that were not a success. Newsletters, reports and meetings were planned to keep everyone up to date.

> "Community inventories will be used as a basis for gaining opinion and interest and as a means of transmitting relevant information to the community."

Modification of Plans

The general purpose of on-going evaluation is to allow for adjustment in the plans, as a result of community feedback while the project is in progress. On-going evaluation meant that occasionally everyone would have to go back to the drawing board to solve whatever was going wrong.

IN SUMMARY

Ten rural school districts, widely distributed over the United States but united in the belief that their school children need, deserve, and can benefit from a program of comprehensive change, have cited the problems each believes most fundamental to its school and community context, and outlined the tactics each believes most likely to produce solutions to their problems. A number of districts share common problems and propose comparable strategies for change. But each has also put forward a diagnosis, and plan of action, all its own.

Taken as a group these plans propose a wide range of possible solutions to current educational needs of rural youth.

CHAPTER FOUR

EARLY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Chapter Three explored ten small rural school districts' plans for comprehensive educational change. This chapter examines the experience these communities are having implementing those plans. It is an interim report. At the end of this five-year project we may find an entirely different picture in each district. This does not mean that material gathered so far is not useful, on the contrary, it provides us with a history of the early process of change in a wide range of rural localities.

At the end of this program, evaluative research undertaken to study each project during each year is needed in order to pull from this experiment methods for educational change for other rural school districts. This chapter explores some material accumulated to date and presents some early pictures of what seems to be happening. It is divided into two sections. The first section describes the process of change as we conceived of it in 1972 (before we began our study of these ten districts). It clarifies the types of educational change these districts are attempting. The second section answers two questions: What differences in early ES implementation are evident within these ten districts by the end of the 1973-74 school year? What distinguishable patterns emerge out of the early attempts of all ten to achieve comprehensive educational change?

In the discussion which follows we have not attempted to answer these questions definitively. Rather we have chosen to illustrate our approach with a few examples derived from the preliminary analyses which we have conducted to date. A more complete analysis will be available in 1976.

THE PROCESS OF PLANNED CHANGE

Students of planned educational change generally view it as a process of introducing new educational programs into a school system within a series of definable stages. New programs require careful planning and analysis. Recognizing a need for changes is conceived as the first step, soon to be followed by a period when new programs can be proposed, weighed,

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tried, modified, and/or rejected. In theory, the process of planned educational change can be separated into five stages:

- Needs assessment
- Initial planning
- Early implementation
- Later implementation
- Institutionalization

In practice, some school districts may meld these stages. Based upon what is presently known by others about the change process, lasting planned change generally requires a systematic progression through all five stages. There seem, however, to be many pitfalls along the way. It is expected that educators may be forced to abandon or drastically modify some plans during the first four stages. How long a school district devotes to each stage usually depends on the type of changes it has undertaken. Whatever the type of change, careful attention generally must be devoted to each stage in order to achieve a smooth transition to the next.

Needs Assessment

Planned educational change theoretically begins when key individuals within a community or its educational system become aware of discrepancies between what a school system is accomplishing and what it ought to be accomplishing. The impetus for an awareness of these discrepancies can come from one or more of the following:

- Student enrollment increases.
- New families and new students bring about a dramatic change in the social makeup of a school district.
- A regional accrediting agency files an adverse report.
- A new school board member is elected.
- A new superintendent of schools is appointed.
- A new source of external funding is announced.

These events may produce several other activities bound to spur on an educational dialogue within a community:

- Educational shortcomings are discussed at public meetings.
- Citizens' committees form to learn more about the schools.
- Newspaper articles are often critical of the schools.

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- Local educators produce studies of school problems.
- Community groups issue school surveys.

If a school system and its surrounding community agree that changes are needed, this stage may be a very brief one. If serious differences of opinion persist, it could continue for many years, with little noticeable progress.

Initial Planning

Once there is agreement during the needs assessment period, a school district may elect to enter a period of systematic planning. This stage, the "initial planning" period, is a particularly crucial time for communities and school systems. Vague goals need to be clarified and made sufficiently explicit to serve as effective guides to action. During this stage, proponents for planned educational change within a community may produce a formal statement which articulates ways community and educational goals can be processed into action--for example, the ten plans described in Chapter Three.

The "initial planning" period is a time when teachers may visit other school districts in the midst of implementing some kind of change so that they can see how others cope with new programs and teaching methods. Communities may decide to set up ad hoc committees derived from local educators and various interested citizens so that a broad span of ideas can be tapped. Some communities may hire consultants to help find ways to carry out comprehensive changes and to clarify for teachers and administrators the process of planned change.

This period enables communities to plot their long term involvement in educational change. Theoretically, at its conclusion, the motivating forces in each school system will have acquired widespread support for an extended period of innovative educational programs.

Early Implementation

The transition from "initial planning" to "implementation" is a crucial one for a school district undertaking planned educational change. During the early implementation stage, new programs and activities begin. Often this requires a rearrangement of school schedules and physical space, as well as a modification of many rules and regulations. Frequently teachers, pupils and parents must learn new roles and relationships.

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The early implementation stage is a period of potential tension and disequilibrium both within the school system and between the school system and its community. Even with thorough initial planning, a host of unanticipated problems seem to arise. Once implementation begins, it is difficult to return to the drawing board to decide, for example:

- To whom teachers should turn for assistance in solving problems associated with a new curriculum.
- Where teachers can find the time to learn the intricacies of a new instructional approach.
- When citizen members of advisory committees should have a major say, and when this responsibility resides with elected school board members.

All change imposes stresses and strains upon schools as organizations. Some can be handled easily, others not. If the individuals most responsible for implementation of new programs -- or those most directly affected by them -- are not able to resolve these tensions, the changes in prospect may have to be substantially modified or even abandoned. Conflict between teachers and administrators is likely as both groups struggle to discover how to change some established educational patterns without unnecessarily disrupting their own lives.

Later Implementation

Usually at the end of the first year of intensive early implementation a point is reached where a consideration of possible "mid-course corrections" seems warranted. A host of questions, such as the following, may require discussion and reevaluation:

- Which innovative activities seem to be working and which do not?
- What modifications seem warranted?
- Are there any components that need to be abandoned?
- Are there any new components that should be added?

For example, the Experimental Schools program did not necessarily expect districts to implement all new procedures at once. Most planned to

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decide in advance upon a logical sequence of activities and systematically add new ones as they become more experienced. Some districts would try out selected activities initially, in order to learn first hand which ones might work and which ones might not. Regardless of the approach, all school districts undergoing planned change seem eventually to reach a point where they must pause briefly to assess their progress, make some hard decisions about what is working and what is not, reorganize their innovative effort, and then push forward. This is the transition point between "early" and "later" implementation.

Some districts may have planned, for instance, to introduce at the early implementation period a new reading or mathematics program. New curricular materials and a more democratic teacher-pupil relationship may have been expected to be equally essential to the success of the program. After the first year, however, several schools might conclude that the new materials are quite effective but changing teacher-pupil relationship is more difficult than they had expected. They might decide to include some staff training sessions. For the following year then, they might schedule teacher workshops, plan for teachers to visit other school districts, or create special summer training programs.

Once a school district is able to feel that its "new" programs are no longer disruptive to its organization, that crises and conflicts seem less frequent and intense, it is expected that the final stage in the process of change can begin.

Institutionalization

An innovative program has been conceived as "institutionalized" when its components have become so accepted by an ongoing educational system that they are no longer viewed as "experimental." Teachers, students, administrators, parents and other citizens no longer speak of their programs as being "new." They come to accept their innovative programs as the established way things are done. However, one or two pockets of hard-core resistance may prevent successful institutionalization.

In order to evaluate whether or not a school district has successfully institutionalized its plans for change, certain questions must be asked: For example,

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- Have the policy manuals of the school district been formally modified to acknowledge the changes being implemented?
- Has the regular budgeting of the school district been changed to provide for local funding of all instructional roles, curricular materials and administrative roles created by the change effort?
- Have all relationships created by the change effort been widely accepted by teachers, administrators, students, parents, and other citizens?

If the answer to such questions is "no," institutionalization of the planned change is unlikely to be achieved.

TYPES OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Not all educational changes are alike. We have found the plans of these ten small rural school districts described in Chapter Three to be different in two important ways:

- they differ in the comprehensiveness of changes to be implemented, and
- they differ in the scope of changes to be implemented.

These two terms--comprehensiveness and scope--have specific meaning and usefulness in the analysis of planned educational change. The following is an explanation of their use in this project.

Comprehensiveness

At the time of its announcment of a nationwide competition, the Experimental Schools program defined comprehensive educational change as a process which must involve at least the following six "facets" of a school system: curriculum; instruction and staffing; community participation; use of time, space, and facilities; school organization, administration, and governance; and ongoing evaluation. Although each school district was required to respond to all of these six facets, their plans show that the emphasis they placed on each one varied from district to district.

This variation, it turns out, is useful. It provides the Experimental Schools program an opportunity to study several different approaches to comprehensive educational change.

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By the end of the 1973-74 school year, for instance, a picture of how well each school district had been able to carry out programs of a comprehensive nature indicates that some school districts were experiencing more visible success than others. On the basis of our analysis to date it appears that this variation is due to two major aspects of the initial planning staff.

The first factor involves the clarity of the document resulting from the planning process. Those school districts who were able to produce explicit, complete, and carefully thought out plans for the program have, so far, appeared to be more prepared for the complex processes involved in educational change. Their plans, have served as important blueprints for all of the practical problems involved in their programs.

The second factor involves the strategy each school district selected for their implementation process. Certain school districts planned a gradual introduction of new programs and methods into their school systems. Others planned to introduce the major proportion of their project all at once.

Scope

The term scope refers to the measurement--how "big," how "widespread," how "difficult"--of a particular school district's aims for any facet of change. Their plans also differ in the scope of their intentions:

- Some plans call for a very small amount of change in a particular facet (for example, curricular changes only in reading), while others call for a much larger amount of change (for example, curricular changes in reading, mathematics, social studies and science).

- Some plans indicate that changes in a particular facet will be limited to a single school or grade level, while others suggest that changes will be widespread throughout the entire school district.

- Some plans call for the type of changes in a particular facet which seem to be rather easy for any school district to implement (for example, the adoption of a new textbook series), while others want to try some changes that traditionally have been extremely difficult to implement (for example, team teaching). Further, some plans call for changes which are similar to what existed previously while others call for very different ones. Generally speaking, the degree of difficulty is closely related to the similarity or difference of the proposed change to what existed previously.

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Any attempt to compare these ten districts on the degree to which they have in fact implemented educational change must take into account both comprehensiveness and scope. In order to assess early ES implementation, then, it was necessary to measure three "dimensions" of scope in regard to each of the six facets of comprehensiveness.

- How big are the changes taking place?
- How widespread are the changes taking place?
- How difficult are the changes taking place?

Figure 4.1 presents graphically the 18 questions to be asked of each of the ten school districts at various points during the change process. This survey was conceived as a way to measure the three dimensions of change within each of the six facets of comprehensiveness. For example:

- Question 1 asks "how big a change in curriculum has been achieved?"
- Question 5 asks "how widespread a change in instruction and staffing has been achieved?"
- Question 18 asks "how difficult a change in ongoing evaluation has been achieved?"

The results of this survey rank each school district in comparison with the other nine for each of the 18 questions. Each district was also assigned a single overall rank ("scope score").[1] Although it is common

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[1] A rank on "early ES implementation" for each of the ten school districts was computed using the following procedure:

1. The ES project within each school district was divided into a series of "components" as specified in the final plan for that project.
2. For each component that was being implemented in the spring of 1974, the "facets" of comprehensiveness which it contained were identified by our on-site researcher.
3. For each facet a separate score for each of the three "dimensions" of change being implemented was computed from data supplied by our on-site researcher.
4. Scores were then averaged across components, producing one score for each of the ten school districts for each of the 18 questions in Figure 4.1.
5. Each district was then ranked relative to the other nine districts on on each of the 18 scores.
6. Finally, to create an overall rank, the 18 ranks for each district were averaged and the resulting averages ranked.

FACET OF COMPREHENSIVE CHANGE	DIMENSION OF COMPREHENSIVE CHANGE		
	How *big* is it?	How *widespread* is it?	How *difficult* is it?
Curriculum	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
Instruction and Staffing	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6
Community Participation	Question 7	Question 8	Question 9
Use of Time, Space, and Facilities	Question 10	Question 11	Question 12
Organization, Administration, and Governance	Question 13	Question 14	Question 15
Ongoing Evaluation	Question 16	Question 17	Question 18

Figure 4.1. Eighteen questions which must be asked to learn about the scope of comprehensive educational change.

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practice to express a high rank with a low number, this system expresses a high rank with a high number. The district with the highest rank in the scope of early ES implementation, consequently, receives a rank of "10" and the lowest a rank of "1".

Variations in rank show once more how some of the school districts tried to introduce more programs than others in the aggregate, but that emphasis in individual programs varied, as the quantity and quality of change being implemented. For instance, certain school districts emphasized curriculum changes in the first year; others concentrated on staff development or on organization, administration and governance. Other school districts emphasized "big" changes at the expense of "widespread" or "difficult" ones. Some school districts tried to initiate some change in most facets, but held back from introducing any difficult changes--at least during their first implementation year.

A study of this survey indicates at this point that some interesting patterns of implementation may be emerging.

- First, the early implementation of certain types of change seems particularly critical to a high overall "scope score" whereas others do not.
- Second, some scores which determine how big, how widespread, or how difficult changes are seem related to each other or to some of the scores of the six facets.
- Third, of the six facets of implementation studied, certain pairs seem to relate to each other.

The following section examines how differences in comprehensiveness and scope, and how different patterns of change are currently affecting early implementation of these projects.

DIFFERENCES IN EARLY ES IMPLEMENTATION

Our first effort to assess the "scope" of comprehensive educational change achieved by each of these ten school districts was made at the end of the 1973-74 school year. At that point, each of the ten districts had been through a year of intensive initial planning followed by a year of early implementation. In some districts, these first two stages overlapped. We saw this as an ideal time to begin to get a sense of where the districts stood in their efforts to implement change.

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Our assessment of these ten school districts at this time is only in terms of those changes which have resulted from their contracts with the Experimental Schools program. We excluded all recent change which could not be attributed to the initiatives of the Experimental Schools program such as

- ESEA Title III projects which had been underway for several years.
- State funded educational change projects.
- Other federal funding received subsequent to the ES grant.

We were careful, therefore, to distinguish in our survey between those changes which were directly attributable to the initiatives of the Experimental Schools program and those which were attributable to other sources. Our answers reflect only the scope of early ES implementation.

The discussion which follows makes no judgment about the eventual "success" or "failure" of these ten projects. It is simply too soon to know. During the next several years we expect to discover within these ten districts a variety of ways which may enable other rural school districts to achieve lasting educational change. Only then will we be able to say which approaches to early implementation are likely to work best for which types of school districts.

Relationships Drawn from Early Implementation Data

Each of the ten plans reviewed in Chapter Three placed considerable emphasis on curricular change. These ten small rural school districts obviously intended to give priority to this facet of their program during the 1973-74 school year. However, in June 1974, the ten districts had had varying success in implementing curricular changes.

Question 1 asked:

- How big a change in curriculum had been achieved in June 1974?

Figure 4.2 presents a graphical representation of the answers derived from each of the ten school districts. The scores range from a high of 95 (indicating that 95 percent of all relevant curricular areas within the school system had undergone some ES-initiated change) to a low of 10 (indicating that only 10 percent had undergone such change).

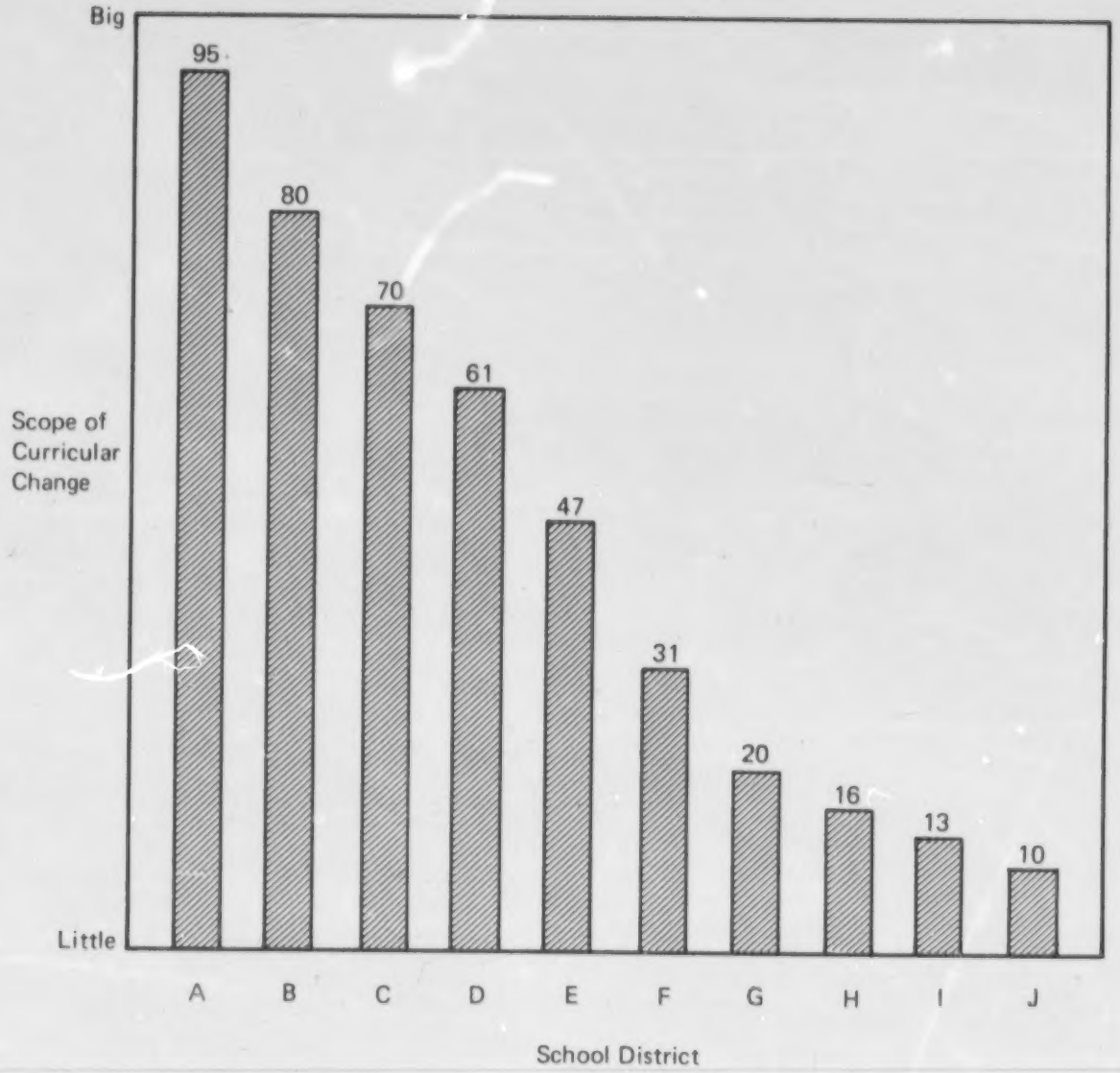

Figure 4.2. The scope of the curricular change being implemented is much bigger in some of the ten school districts than it is in others.

The results of our survey, furthermore, show that school districts not stressing curriculum as much were more actively engaged in staff development--a first step, as they saw it, towards implementation of curriculum changes later on. School districts may not be able to simultaneously emphasize major changes in curriculum and staff development during an early implementation year. A choice may be necessary.

Another relationship is seen in a study of those districts emphasizing "big" curriculum changes. Those districts do not seem to have "widespread" implementation of their staff development procedures. Rather, staff development is limited to particular skills. Workshops seem to be limited to a few teachers who teach certain subjects or certain grades. They tend to be "one time" events rather than extended or ongoing in-service training. They are more likely to simply impart information rather than affect the teacher role significantly.

There also appears to be a relationship between changes in curriculum and in the use of time, space, and facilities. Many "big" curriculum changes seem to involve changes in the use of time (such as "mini-courses"), the use of space (such as open-space classrooms or groupings), and the use of facilities (such as career workshops, new audiovisual equipment, etc.).

Another relationship exists between community participation and organization, administration, and governance. Increased community participation seems to have ramifications for the organization and governance of the school district. Boundaries between the school system and the communities become less defined and old ways of influencing decisions change. A balance in the authority structure changes. Community members, parents, even pupils find themselves more aware of what is going on in the schools and become more involved in day-to-day operation of the school system.

In some school districts, this relationship has taken the form of an active curriculum cabinet or advisory committee. In others, community participation has been limited primarily to involvement (as students and instructors) in adult education classes. The latter has influenced the community's awareness and interest in the schools, but has had less effect on change in governance.

Reports derived from similar surveys may be more revealing at the end of the program than at present. If, for instance, a school district with a

very low score on the curriculum implementation in 1974, but with a higher score on its staff development facet, reaches 1979 with a high curriculum score on an institutionalization graph, the conclusions drawn from all of these reports will be very different than they might be now. In this way these graphs serve primarily as historical pictures which will eventually document an evolutionary process--a process currently in progress and consequently without, at this time, any final suppositions.

Difference Between Extreme Districts

There is considerable variation in the rankings of these ten school districts on each of the questions. In fact, no district had the same rank for all eighteen questions.

Figure 4.3 presents the ranks on each of our 18 questions for the school district which we ranked highest and lowest in overall scope of early ES implementation. There were three questions for which the districts that ranked highest and lowest overall, also ranked highest and lowest:

- How big is implementation of curricular change?
- How big is implementation of changes in instruction and staffing?
- How difficult is implementation of changes in organization, administration and governance?

However, on all 15 other questions, these two districts diverged from their extreme differences in ranking.

In no instance did rankings of the two districts reverse, although in one instance (when we asked the question "how widespread is implementation of change in instruction and staffing?") their ranking is very close (4 vs. 2). Although there is a tendency for the district ranked highest in overall scope of early ES implementation to also be ranked highest on answers to each of the 18 questions which constitute that ranking, the pattern for the district ranked lowest is not nearly as uniform. Similar variation exists for each of the other eight school districts.

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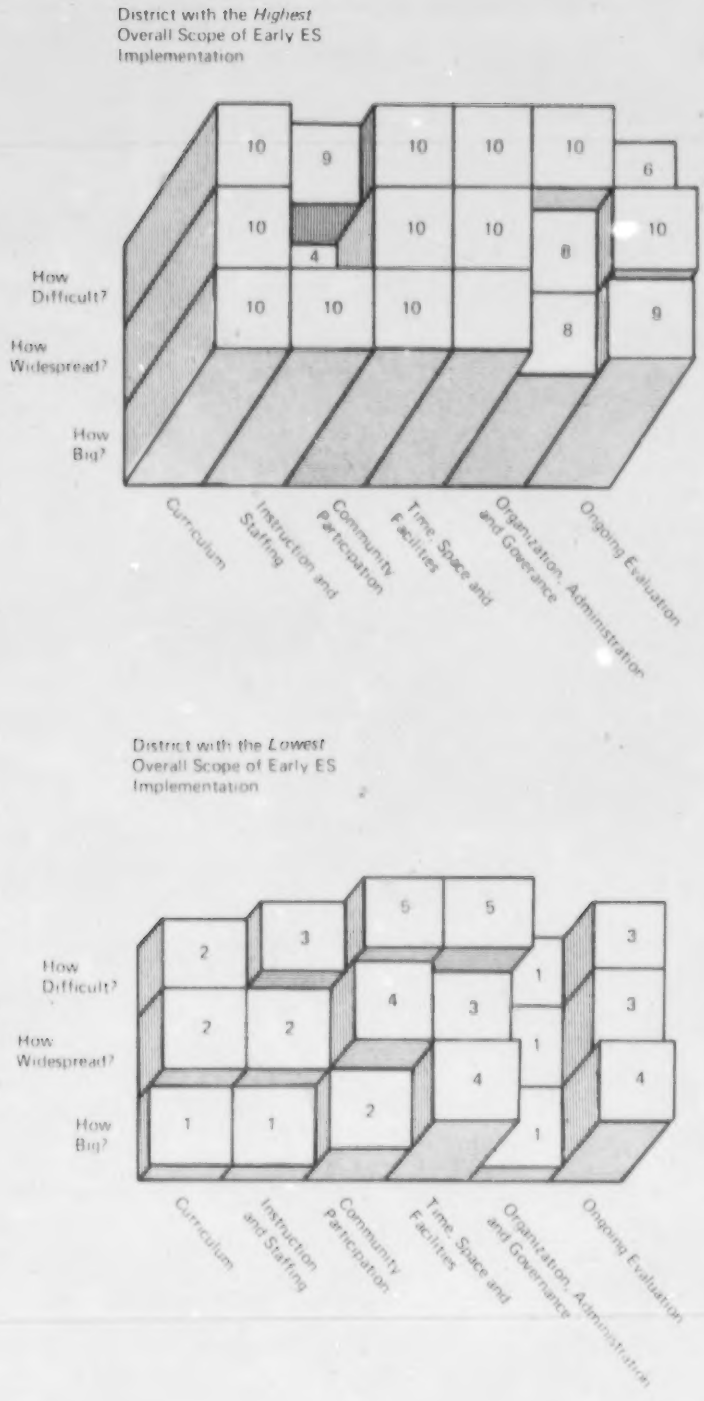

Figure 4.3. A comparison of the districts highest and lowest in overall scope of early ES implementation on each of the six facets and three dimensions of comprehensive educational change. (The numbers at the top of the columns refer to the rank of that district on that question. A rank of 10 is the highest; 1 is the lowest.)

PATTERNS OF COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

These ten small rural school districts differ considerably in the strategies which they have apparently developed in order to achieve lasting educational change. Some have emphasized changes in organization and governance, others changes in curriculum. Some have emphasized big and widespread changes; others show changes which are more difficult to achieve.

Two very different "patterns of change" are represented by those districts to which we have assigned a rank of 9 and 3 in the overall scope of changes. Change profiles for these two districts have been presented in Figure 4.4. This graph demonstrates how the district that ranked 9 in overall scope seems to have adopted a change strategy which emphasizes big and widespread changes in:

- curriculum
- community participation , and
- organization, administration and governance

In this first year of early ES implementation, this district placed relatively less emphasis on changes that were difficult.

The district that ranked 3 in overall scope seemed to be adopting a very different approach to comprehensive change. It seemed to be placing more emphasis upon changes that were difficult, particularly those in:

- Instruction and staffing
- Community participation, and
- Use of time, space and facilities.

This distinction between these two school districts is particularly dramatic in the case of community participation. The district with a rank of 9 overall had the following ranks on each of the three dimensions of scope:

- How big a change? 9
- How widespread a change? 9
- How difficult a change? 1

The district with a rank of 3 overall had the following ranks on each of the three dimensions:

- How big a change? 1
- How widespread a change? 1
- How difficult a change? 8

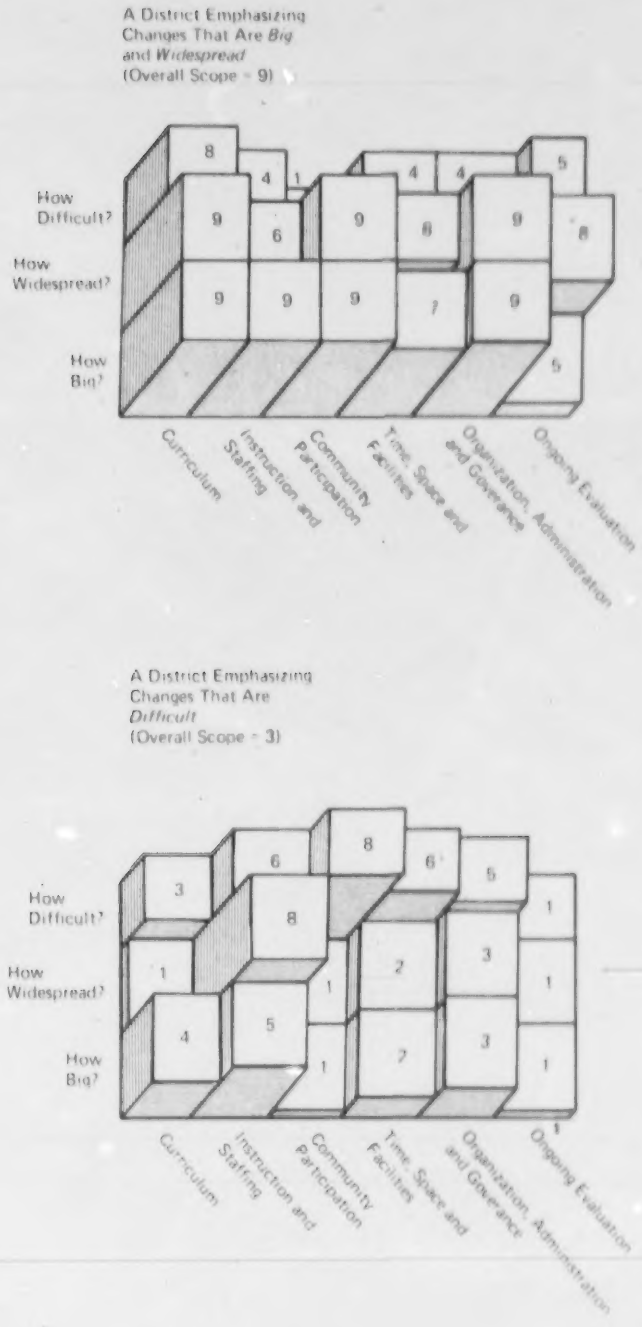

Figure 4.4 Not all districts had the same pattern of early ES implementation. Some tended to emphasize changes which were big and widespread, others changes that were difficult. (The numbers at the top of the columns refer to the rank of that district on that question. A rank of 10 is the highest; 1 the lowest.)

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Clearly these two districts have taken very different approaches to the participation of citizens within their educational systems. One has attempted changes in citizen participation that were relatively big and widespread, but relatively easy for any school district to implement. The other has attempted changes in citizen participation that were relatively difficult yet chose to introduce those changes in a small and limited way. What implications might such a difference in strategy have for the long-run institutionalization of comprehensive educational change?

Answering that question at this point would be speculative. It could be presumed, for instance, that a school district able to involve its citizens in a series of "big" and "widespread" changes, whether or not they were relatively easy, ought to be able to recruit its citizens for a new stage--taking some "difficult" steps.

Likewise, it could be argued that a school district able to introduce "difficult" changes, even though in a limited and small way, ought to be able to build on that experience. Having gone through the worst first, change might be easier thereafter.

Material gathered so far should <u>not</u>, however, be used to fuel such speculative assumptions. These early surveys serve primarily as indicators of how small rural school districts may "trade off" emphasis on one or another facet of comprehensive educational change in order to cope with the total impact of such a massive program. If any conclusions are to be made in 1974, they ought to be limited, for instance, to the significance of this trade-off policy. Small rural school districts may find that they cannot uniformly introduce educational change in all six facets of the Experimental Schools program during an early implementation year. These ten rural school districts may also find it impractical to introduce change at a consistent level--equally big, equally widespread, equally difficult.

The long range significance of choices made by these school districts at this stage will, furthermore, not always be apparent. As Chapter Two demonstrated, educational change does not occur in a vacuum. The rationale behind each school district's plan most likely depends on the peculiarities of its situation. Chapter Five examines community and school characteristics that seem to be associated with these decisions.

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CHAPTER FIVE

WHY ARE SOME PROJECTS FURTHER ALONG THAN OTHERS?

As of June 1974 differences among the ten Experimental Schools projects are substantial. These districts vary both in their overall scope of early ES implementation and also with respect to each of the 18 questions which we asked in forming that judgment. Why is this the case? What is there about these ten small rural school districts which might explain why some of the projects were further along than others at the end of the 1973-74 school year?

We have organized our search for answers to these important questions around two possible explanations:

- We looked at the community beyond each school system to see if various characteristics of that community might explain differences in early ES implementation.

- We looked at the school system as a complex organization to see if various organizational characteristics of it might explain differences in early ES implementation.

There are, of course, several reasons why such community and organizational characteristics could influence the process of educational change. In general, we were guided by the assumption that public education in rural America does not take place in a social vacuum. What goes on in schools can be very much influenced by a variety of external factors (of the type described in Chapter Two) which either block or facilitate the type of plans described in Chapter Three. Some of these factors require change to occur more rapidly; others prevent its occurrence; some simply create a setting in which change is more difficult; still others create a setting in which change is easier.

In considering both the community at large and the organization of the school system itself we are making no assumptions about the inevitability of the various "social factors" we have identified. We believe that their effects are real, however. Efforts at comprehensive change used in this program will need to take them into account. If lasting change is to be achieved in other small rural districts, strategies being used by these Experimental Schools projects will need to be modified to fit local conditions.

Many community characteristics are beyond the control of both citizens and educators. Still their existence must be acknowledged in any carefully planned effort at educational change. And while the school system's organizational characteristics are clearly more subject to alteration by educators and interested citizens, even these are not always easy to modify without very careful planning.

The focus for this interim report is solely upon the "early implementation" stage of the five-stage process described in Chapter Four. The various characteristics which we have found to be predictive of the scope of early implementation may not necessarily be the ones which by 1979 will prove to be most predictive of the scope of institutionalization--the final stage. In fact, both our theoretical framework and the experience of those who have studied this matter within other types of organizations suggest that successful institutionalization does not necessarily follow rapid implementation.[1]

The conclusions presented in this chapter are based upon an analysis of only the overall ranks introduced in Chapter Four. In most instances, these ten ranks have been grouped into three discrete categories: high, moderate, and low. In no case is the overall rank of early ES implementation perfectly correlated with a community or organizational characteristic. Thus, there are important exceptions to every one of our conclusions. In some instances, these exceptions are no doubt caused by imperfections in the way in which we have measured either the scope of early implementation or the particular factor being related to it. However, in most instances they probably reflect the fact that the phenomena we seek to explain are very complex and involve simultaneous interaction among many factors. Clearly the relationships between community and organizational factors and early ES implementation which we describe are more complex than we currently realize. In future reports, some of this complexity will begin to unravel. Until then we can at best merely note general trends, speculate about why they seem to exist, and caution against overgeneralizing from these interim findings.

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[1] See, for example, Jerald Hage and Michael Aiken, Social Change in Complex Organizations (New York: Random House, 1970).

WHICH COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Our analysis of how community forces affect the process of educational change has relied on several sources:

- We studied newspapers and other public documents available in each community to learn about historical trends.
- We examined in detail the 1970 U.S. Census of Population for each school district to learn about its current social and economic characteristics.
- We sent questionnaires to a cross-section of citizens within each community to learn about their attitudes and values.

We have found that many characteristics of the larger communities in which these ten efforts at educational change are taking place appear to be related to the scope of early ES implementation. Although there are exceptions, a high scope of early ES implementation tends to be associated favorably with:

- An expanding economy.
- A population that is relatively large by rural standards.
- A population that is relatively concentrated geographically.
- A population with relatively similar social and cultural characteristics.
- A population with relatively easy access to a metropolitan area.
- A population not recently unified or reorganized as a school district.
- A population relatively high in family income.
- A population which is relatively satisfied with community life.

What is there about this set of community characteristics which seems to affect the ability of these small rural school districts to implement a program of comprehensive educational change?

We have formed three general conclusions on the basis of our experience to date. The scope of early ES implementation increases with:

- the stage of development of a community.
- the social and cultural similarity of a community.
- the general quality of life in a community.

Stages of Community Development

There are important distinctions in the stage of development of rural communities which parallel similar distinctions among nations, states, and regions. A host of demographic characteristics of rural communities distinguishes them in their ability to implement educational change.

Although all ten of these rural school districts are "small" by urban standards, some are considerably smaller than others. In general, the smaller the population of the school district the less advanced its early implementation (Table 5.1).

All of these ten rural school districts are economically "poor" by urban standards. Most lack an expanding tax base which can be easily tapped for the support of their public schools. In general, within these relatively poor districts the lower the median family income of a school district, the lower the scope of early implementation (Table 5.1).

These ten rural school districts also show decidedly different patterns of population growth. Some have been losing population in the period between 1960 and 1970; others have been growing rapidly. Districts which are high in implementation tend to be those which have rapidly increasing populations (Table 5.1).

The experience of dealing with increasing numbers of pupils appears to offer an advantage. An influx of families from other communities may bring new ideas into these rural districts. Adding new classrooms to accomodate new pupils may be insufficient; communities often feel a push to adapt the quality and form of their educational programs. Rural school districts which are not relatively large, growing, or wealthy often must make a special effort to mobilize those human and economic resources which in other school districts seem to make early implementation more advanced.

TABLE 5.1: SCHOOL DISTRICTS EXHIBITING A HIGH SCOPE OF EARLY ES IMPLEMENTATION TEND TO HAVE DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS FROM THOSE WHICH ARE MODERATE OR LOW

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC	SCOPE OF EARLY ES IMPLEMENTATION		
	Low (N=3)	Moderate (N=4)	High (N=3)
1. Population in 1970	4,600	4,200	6,700
2. Rate of population growth: 1960-1970	−2%	0%	+16%
3. Median family income (adjusted for non-metropolitan regional cost of living differences)	$7,264	$7,582	$9,375

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Social and Cultural Similarity

Rural America is characterized by a wide range of intercommunity social and cultural patterns. Some communities share common racial or ethnic traditions; others are more diverse. Some communities have one or two major industries dominant in their districts; others have a diverse economic base. Some communities share a common religious preference; others provide a wide range of religious institutions.

In general, early ES implementation seemed to be most advanced in those school districts which are homogeneous in their social and cultural characteristics.

It seems reasonable to speculate that there are social and cultural "cleavages" within some rural communities which make implementation of educational change difficult. Various citizens often disagree on educational goals, and on how to accomplish goals. When this happens, differences regarding political, moral, or ethical issues (often unrelated to matters of education) can spill over into the schools and make the implementation of educational change particularly difficult. Those school districts with homogeneous social and cultural characteristics seem to have an advantage when it comes to the early implementation of educational change.

Quality of Life

"Quality of life" can mean different things to different people. To some it is merely community development; size, wealth, and growth means quality. To others it is more closely associated with social and cultural background; for them, being with others of similar background means quality. Quality of community life can also be viewed more broadly--how well a community helps individuals achieve their basic social needs. In our assessment of this aspect of a community, we asked a cross-section of citizens to tell us how satisfied they were with services or benefits they receive from fifteen areas of community life.

- Schools
- Jobs
- Public welfare for the handicapped, aged, and children
- Local government

- Health services
- Protection of the natural environment
- Housing
- Economic strength of farms, industry, banks and stores
- Social services such as family counseling, adoption, youth, and elderly programs
- Newspapers, television, radio, books, magazines, and telephone
- Buses, trains, planes, boats, cars, and roads
- Police and the courts
- Recreation and leisure activities
- Churches
- Family life

Citizens were asked to answer in terms of a five-point scale ranging from "I am very satisfied" (coded as a 5) to "I am not satisfied" (coded as a 1). On the average, citizens within these school districts are only moderately satisfied with the quality of community life. However, in general, the more satisfied citizens were, the higher the scope of early ES implementation (Table 5.2). A community with citizens at least moderately satisfied with the quality of life seems to provide a climate in which implementation of educational change can be more rapidly accomplished.

WHICH ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

In order to understand how the organizational nature of these school districts influences the process of educational change, our researchers:

- Sent questionnaires to all teachers and administrators within each school district to learn about their life histories, role performance and current attitudes.
- Sent special questionnaires to the superintendent, project directors, and principals to learn about their roles within the ES project.
- Studied school reports and other documents to learn about the organizational characteristics of schools and school districts.

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TABLE 5.2. SCHOOL DISTRICTS EXHIBITING A HIGH SCOPE OF EARLY ES IMPLEMENTATION TEND TO BE CHARACTERIZED BY A HIGHER QUALITY OF COMMUNITY LIFE

INDICATOR OF QUALITY OF COMMUNITY LIFE	SCOPE OF EARLY ES IMPLEMENTATION		
	Low (N=3)	Moderate (N=4)	High (N=3)
1. Schools	3.3	3.3	3.5
2. Jobs	3.4	3.5	3.6
3. Public welfare for the handicapped, aged, and children	2.9	3.1	3.0
4. Local government	2.8	2.8	3.0
5. Health Services	2.9	3.1	3.0
6. Protection of the natural environment	2.9	3.1	3.0
7. Housing	2.8	2.8	3.2
8. Economic strength of farms, industry, banks and stores	3.2	3.1	3.4
9. Social services such as family counseling adoption, youth and elderly programs	2.8	2.9	3.0
10. Newspapers, TV, radio, books, magazines and telephone	2.9	3.0	3.1
11. Buses, trains, planes, boats cars and roads	2.9	3.0	3.1
12. Police and the courts	1.9	2.3	3.0
13. Recreation and leisure activities	3.1	3.5	3.5
14. Churches	3.9	3.5	3.9
15. Family life	4.2	4.0	4.1
Average across all 15 indicators	3.0	3.1	3.3

From this research we noted a large number of characteristics which appeared to be related to the scope of early ES implementation. With some exceptions, those school districts most advanced in their implementation could be characterized by:

- An experienced faculty
- Strong leadership from key administrators
- A team of committed leaders
- Teachers and administrators ready for change
- Teachers and administrators dissatisfied with what they have been able to do for their students
- Teachers and administrators with recent access to new ideas
- Frequent coordination of teacher planning activities
- Past experience with systematic educational change

What is there about these characteristics which seem to affect the ability of a school district to implement comprehensive educational change?

We have formed five general conclusions on the basis of our experience to date. The scope of early ES implementation increases with:

- thoroughness in the planning process and clarity of plans,
- breadth of the desire for change and the recognition that more needs to be done for students,
- past experience of the district with systematic change,
- degree of commitment and continuity of educational leaders, and
- degree of coordination and centralization of decision making within the school district.

The Planning Process

As noted in Chapter One, in June 1972 each of the ten school districts was awarded a one-year grant by the Experimental Schools program to prepare a locally-determined plan for comprehensive change within its educational system. In accepting the planning grant, the school board of each of these ten districts, was, in effect, committing its professional

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staff to the preparation of a five-year plan for comprehensive educational change within that district. Although this was not always clear to either the school board members or the professional staff within the districts, the planning year was seen by the staff of the Experimental Schools program as critical for developing not only goals and methods, but also commitment and enthusiasm.

The ten school districts differed substantially in how they used the resources made available through their planning grants. In all districts citizens were confused about this commitment which their school board had made to the Experimental Schools program. Was this a grant of money to raise the salaries of teachers and administrators? Was it a grant to buy new textbooks and supplies? Was it a grant to add needed additional classroom space? The answer to all of these questions was no, but it took a considerable while in all ten districts for the unique requirements of the Experimental Schools program to be widely understood by teachers, administrators, and involved citizens.

Once a commitment was understood, some teachers and administrators in some districts were alarmed and angered at their school board. In most districts the letter of interest had been the work of a single person (often the superintendent, but sometimes a key principal or teacher). Thus many teachers and administrators were caught off guard. As a result a great deal of time had to be set aside during the planning year to explain to educators and citizens the opportunities and responsibilities associated with the Experimental Schools program. In some districts teachers and principals were angered by the excessive demands the Experimental Schools program would make upon their professional autonomy and personal lives. Why had they not been consulted before the letter of interest was submitted to Washington in April, or at least before the grant document was signed in June? Citizens in some communities also resented the apparent intrusion of the "federal government" in their local affairs.

For these and other reasons the planning year was a difficult one for all ten of these rural school districts. Within several districts there was at least one point at which some thought was given to severing the relationship with the Experimental Schools program; the reality of what was expected of them seemed to be overwhelming. A staff member from the Experimental Schools program, assigned to each district, visited it several

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times during the planning year, and offered additional counsel by telephone. Still, each district found the preparation of a five-year plan to be particularly demanding.

None of the districts seemed to have a realistic understanding of how demanding this planning period would be. In previous Title II and Title III grants, they had written very brief and often vague proposals. This time they had to prepare an extensive blueprint (some of the plans eventually were in excess of 100 pages). Although these districts could hire consultants for some help, they were advised to use consultants as a supplement to local planning and not as a substitute for it.

There is a relationship, naturally, between this one-year planning process and the scope of early ES implementation. Although it is difficult to quantify the quality of the ten plans, it is apparent to those who read them carefully that they differ considerably in their clarity and their grasp of how their educational systems could be different in five years.

In general the scope of early ES implementation ranks higher in those school districts with clear and concise plans than in those where the plans seem cloudy and diffuse. The most effective plans have spelled out various roles and responsibilities associated with new educational approaches. Teachers and administrators know what is expected of them. Parents and students understand how their experiences are likely to change.

Those districts unable to clearly define their goals and methods seem to have experienced particular difficulty in implementing comprehensive change. Without a clear plan to refer to, teachers, administrators, parents, and students seem to have spent considerable time and energy struggling to clarify what they should do.

Desire and Impetus for Change

In June, 1973, after the Experimental Schools program had tentatively accepted their five-year plan each of the ten rural school districts signed a long-term contract with the federal government calling for the implementation of their program. At that time, each district legally bound itself to use the federal funds to transform its educational program in the ways specified in its plan. Although school boards in each district signed such a document, the districts differed considerably in the extent to which this "commitment to change" was widely shared among those most responsible for implementing the plan.

In our analysis of these differences during the Fall of 1973, we asked all teachers and administrators the following question:

- In your opinion, was it a good idea for your school district to become an Experimental Schools project?

Across the ten districts, the percent of respondents who answered "yes" to this question ranged from a low of 39% to a high of 83%. Even after a year of planning and of general dissemination of the opportunities provided by this program, there were many differences among the ten districts in the degree to which teachers and administrators welcomed this opportunity. School districts found to rank high on the scope of early ES implementation generally had a higher percentage of teachers and administrators who supported the project than did those found to be low (Table 5.3).

A similar finding emerged when we asked a cross-section of citizens if they thought the new funds from the Experimental Schools program would improve their schools. The results show that 21% to 65% of citizens who responded felt such benefits would arise. Districts ranked high in the scope of early ES implementation generally have a higher percentage than those ranked low (Table 5.3). It seems, consequently, that in those school districts where both school personnel and community residents are skeptical of the ability of the ES project to benefit the community and its youth, the scope of early ES implementation has been adversely affected.

In order to assess the extent of impetus for change and the sensitivity within the school district to the need for systematic change, we asked teachers and administrators whether they felt that each of the following was a serious problem for their schools:

- We have too many pupils who do not have the academic ability necessary to succeed in school.
- Too few of our graduates are able to succeed in whatever school or college they go to next.

We felt that their response to the first statement could give us some idea of the degree to which teachers and administrators saw the quality of the "raw materials" with which they must work to be a problem for the school district. Answers to the second question could tell us how they regarded the quality of the "finished products" produced from these raw materials.

TABLE 5.3. SCHOOL DISTRICTS EXHIBITING A HIGH SCOPE OF EARLY IMPLEMENTATION TEND TO BE CHARACTERIZED BY A BROADER COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

INDICATOR OF COMMITMENT TO CHANGE	SCOPE OF EARLY ES IMPLEMENTATION		
	Low (N = 3)	Moderate (N = 4)	High (N = 3)
1. Percent of *teachers* and *administrators* who feel that their ES project was a "good idea"	59	59	68
2. Percent of *citizens* who feel that their ES project will improve their schools	34	47	46

Figure 5.1 portrays the degree to which "raw materials" and "finished products" are seen to be a problem for the school. It demonstrates that school districts low in early ES implementation generally perceive their pupil raw materials to be more of a problem than do those districts of moderate or high early ES implementation. However, districts low in early ES implementation do not seem to accept as much responsibility for the subsequent lack of success of their students. In the districts moderate or high in early ES implementation, there is generally a much greater discrepancy between the two types of problems. Evidently if teachers and administrators sense that the school district is not doing as much as it could for its pupils, this provides an important impetus towards early implementation of comprehensive educational change.

Experience and Knowledge Base

These ten small rural school districts, as noted above, differed in their experience with previous efforts at systematic educational change. Although the extensive planning required as part of the Experimental Schools program was unique for all ten districts, two districts had had much more experience with systematic change efforts than the other eight. Both of those districts seemed to have had a head start in the early implementation of their five-year plans. Although in both of these districts there seemed to have been considerable teacher resistance to further systematic change, the accumulated experience with previous change efforts seemed to overcome such resistance and expedite implementation.

Another dimension of the accumulated experience of a school district is the number of years teachers have taught in their present school and school district. Small rural schools have been particularly plagued by teacher turnover. The turnover rates from one year to the next are often in excess of 50 percent. Those districts which ranked high in the scope of early ES implementation generally had teaching staffs with more local experience than those which ranked low (Table 5.4). Although one might be tempted to argue that young and relatively inexperienced teachers bring with them a certain freshness and receptivity to change not characteristic of their more experienced colleagues, this argument does not hold up in these ten small rural school districts. Some professional experience in the present school and school district seems important to the achievement of a high scope of early ES implementation.

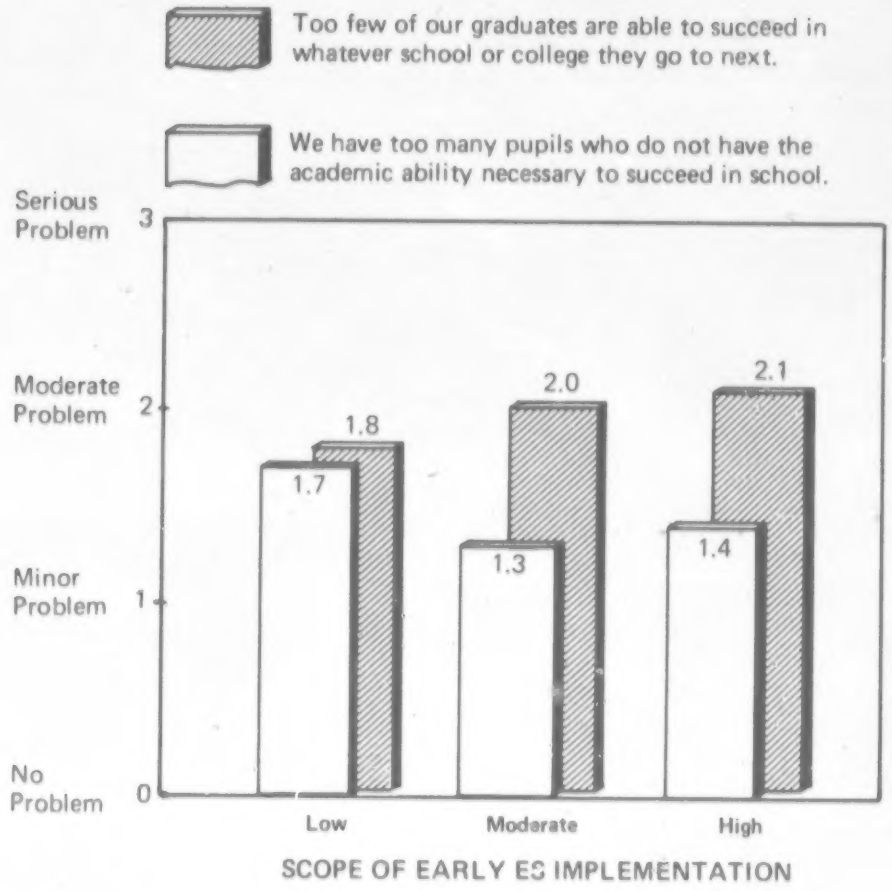

Figure 5.1 School districts exhibiting a high scope of early ES implementation tend to be characterized by a large discrepancy between the degree to which pupils as "raw materials" and as "finished products" are seen to be a problem.

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TABLE 5.4. SCHOOL DISTRICTS EXHIBITING A HIGH SCOPE OF EARLY ES IMPLEMENTATION TEND TO HAVE TEACHERS WITH GREATER EXPERIENCE

INDICATOR OF TEACHER EXPERIENCE	SCOPE OF EARLY ES IMPLEMENTATION		
	Low (N = 3)	Moderate (N = 4)	High (N = 3)
1. Average number of years of teaching experience in their present school district	4.0 years	4.7 years	5.6 years
2. Average number of years of teaching experience in their present school	3.4 years	4.5 years	4.6 years

Commitment of School District Leaders

In all ten school districts the school board had formally contracted with the Experimental Schools program of the National Institute of Education to implement their plans. Nevertheless, the commitment of school district leaders during the implementation year (particularly that of the superintendent) varied considerably from one district to the next.

Apparently the scope of early ES implementation depends heavily upon the commitment of school district leaders, particularly that of the superintendent and his key administrative aides. If a superintendent provided the impetus for a letter of interest and then took an active role in the preparation of the five-year plan, that district tended to be high in the scope of early ES implementation at the end of the 1973-74 school year. If a superintendent had not provided the impetus or had been replaced by a successor with different ideas, then that district was often less successful.

Early ES implementation also seems to have been affected by the support provided a superintendent from his administrative team. If a superintendent seemed to be acting on his own, if his key aides did not share his enthusiasm, implementation was often impeded.

Centralization and Coordination of Decision Making

During the planning year, the staff of the Experimental Schools program stressed the necessity of involving a wide spectrum of school and community sentiment in the planning process. Districts were encouraged to form advisory councils which included parents and students as well as teachers and administrators. This requirement underscored an assumption widely held by educational planners, that if meaningful locally-determined five-year plans were to be prepared, and if there was to be support for the implementation of the plans once created, it would be essential to have participation from those responsible for plan implementation.

Each of the ten districts made some provision for "participatory democracy" but advisory councils' influence over the planning process varied considerably among the ten districts. Figure 5.2 presents graphically the degree of influence of the school board, superintendent, central office staff, principals, teachers, parents and pupils in the districts which rank the highest and lowest in the scope of early ES implementation. Our scale of influence runs from a low of "zero" (no influence at all) to a high of

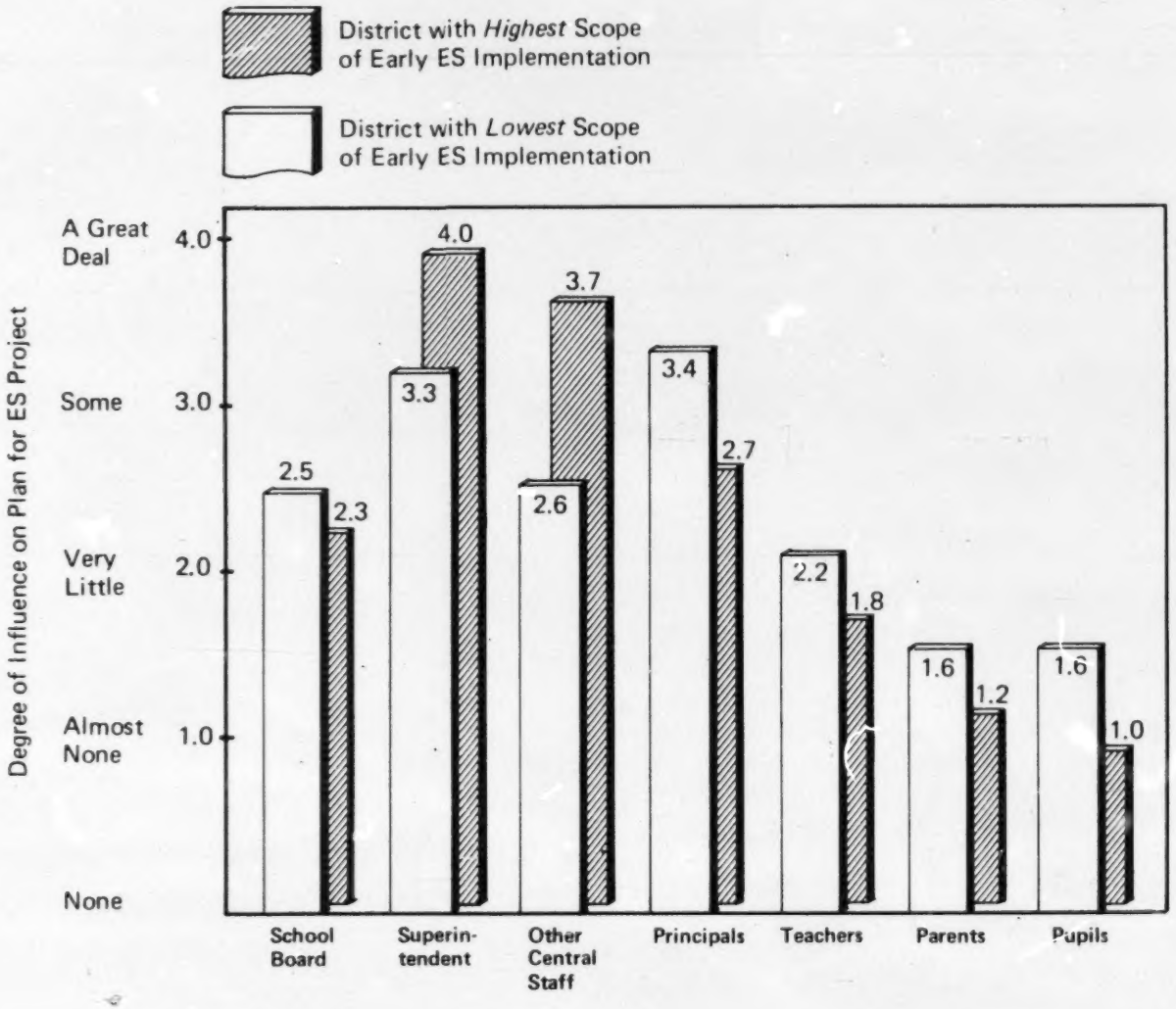

Figure 5.2. The School District Highest in Early ES Implementation is one in which the Superintendent and Key Aides exerted greatest influence in the Planning Process. The School District Lowest in Early ES Implementation is one in which relatively greater influence was exerted by Principals, Teachers, Parents and Pupils.

"four" (a great deal of influence). It is apparent in Figure 5.2 that the district which ranked highest in early ES implementation can be characterized as one in which the superintendent and his key aides played the crucial role in the planning process with minor roles being played by principals, teachers, parents and pupils. On the other hand, the district found to be lowest in early ES implementation apparently took more seriously the democratic assumptions of the Experimental Schools program; however, emphasis on a broader base of power and influence in the planning process did not seem to bear fruit during this early implementation stage.

This pattern of power and influence in the planning process is not merely confined to two extreme districts. In Figure 5.3 all districts are examined after being classified as high, moderate, or low in early ES implementation. Although for all three types of districts the superintendents are generally reported to have exerted more influence on the planning process than did principals, this distinction is particularly pronounced in those districts ranked highest in the scope of early ES implementation (Figure 5.3).

Early implementation seems to be most advanced in those districts where authority and decision-making powers were centralized in the superintendent and one or two key aides. Such firm, centralized control may be necessary to achieve broad coordination of the project and to properly allocate resources. New comprehensive programs similar to the Experimental Schools program seem to need strong leadership to cut red tape, and otherwise prepare the entire school system for change. Centralized leadership also seems necessary to counteract resistance to change. Whenever influence is exerted by subordinates (or by outsiders) the change process can often be co-opted, diverted, compromised, or even sabotaged. Although a decentralized school system is often advocated on the grounds that it is more "flexible" than a centralized one, such flexibility seems better suited to facilitate natural (i.e., unplanned) change. When "comprehensive planned" change is the objective, flexibility during the planning and early implementation stage seems to inhibit rapid implementation.

In the long run, these results may offer different perspectives: a long period of strong leadership by the superintendent may undermine the initiative of subordinates and discourage their identification with the fate of the project. Their commitment to the project may last only as long as current funding (or the current superintendent). It remains to be seen

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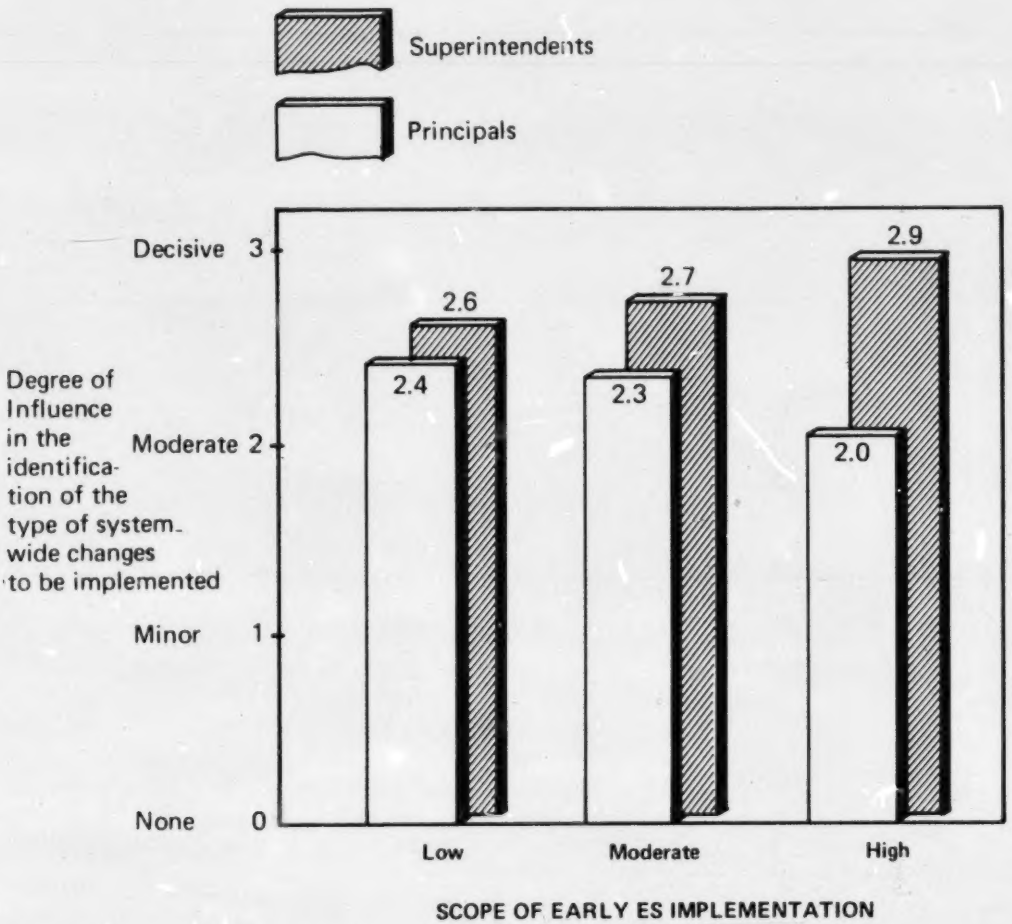

Figure 5.3. School districts exhibiting a high scope of early ES implementation tend to be characterized by a large discrepancy between the influence of principals and the superintendent in the identification of the type of system-wide changes to be implemented.

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whether this strategy of strong centralized leadership which seems to be effective during early implementation is also effective for institutionalization of change. Will districts which now show the most advanced scope of early ES implementation be able to create changes which persist beyond federal funding, technical assistance, and contract monitoring? Or will districts which depend more heavily on the participation of principals, teachers, parents, and pupils eventually achieve more lasting change? More materials will be available to answer these questions next year.